

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

March 1, 2016

INMATE HEALTH CARE COSTS

As a follow-up to discussions at NACo's recent Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, we joined other County stakeholders in advocating in support of Congressman Hastings' (D-FL) H.R. 4201, the *Restoring the Partnership for County Health Care Costs Act*. H.R. 4201 would remove the so-called "inmate exception" that prevents individuals from being eligible for Medicaid, Medicare, SSI, and CHIP benefits while they are in the County's jail awaiting trial, even though they have not been convicted of a crime. Estimates of the number of non-adjudicated inmates who would otherwise be eligible for these benefits vary, but reinstatement of their eligibility would have a significant impact on the County's costs for inmate health care. The bill has been referred jointly to the House Committees on Energy and Commerce and on Ways and Means, neither of which has of yet scheduled hearings on the proposal.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

In conjunction with advocacy efforts coordinated by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A), we contacted the House Education and the Workforce Committee to reiterate the County's support for reauthorization and funding of the Act's programs, emphasizing the wide range of critical services OAA supports for the elderly population in Santa Barbara County. Last year, the Senate unanimously approved S. 192, the *Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act*, and we urged the House committee to either take up the Senate measure or expedite work on their own version of OAA reauthorization. We also asked Congresswoman Capps to encourage her colleagues who serve on the committee to complete action on the Older Americans Act, which has languished since the last Congress.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

HUD recently announced formula allocations for community planning and development programs, based on enactment of the FY 2016 appropriations levels. We were informed that

the County was allocated \$1.075 million in CDBG funding, \$730,862 million under the HOME program, and \$142,614 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding.

We alerted the local delegation to impending floor action on Congressman Luetkemeyer's (R-MO) H.R. 3700, the *Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act*, which would make numerous changes to housing programs, including public housing, housing choice vouchers, and project-based rental assistance. We also provided County staff with the House Financial Services Committee's report to accompany the measure, which includes a section-by-section discussion of its provisions. H.R. 3700 has strong support of national housing advocacy groups, and was approved by a vote of 427-0 on February 2. It has now been referred to the Senate, where companion legislation has not been introduced.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

Working in coordination with NACo, we asked Senators Boxer and Feinstein and Congresswoman Capps to sign onto a bipartisan and bicameral letter in support of full funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program through the FY 2017 appropriations process. The letter is to be sent to the leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, and we also contacted the committees directly to advocate for full funding for the program. In addition, we submitted a formal programmatic request regarding PILT to Senator Feinstein in her role as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Santa Barbara County received over \$1.65 million in PILT for FY 2015.

FIREFIGHTING – DRONE INTERFERENCE

Last year, Congressman Cook (R-CA) introduced H.R. 3025, the *Wildfire Airspace Protection Act*, in response to several incidents in California during which unregulated drone use forced aerial firefighting operations over uncontrolled wild fires to be suspended. The measure would provide a criminal penalty for

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launching drones that interfere with fighting wildfires affecting Federal property, including National Forest and BLM lands in the County. While the House Judiciary Committee has not yet scheduled hearings on H.R. 3025, during the House Transportation Committee markup of H.R. 4441, the *Aviation Innovation, Reform,*

and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act, Congresswoman Brownley (D-CA) successfully added an amendment that would provide for civil fines of up to \$25,000 for operating a drone that interferes with wildlife suppression efforts.

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