

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 7, 2016

FY 2017 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Congress returned from its summer district work period after Labor Day, with the most pressing issue being the rapidly approaching beginning of the new Fiscal Year on October 1. Despite a flurry of activity earlier in the year, to date not a single appropriations measure has been signed into law for FY 2017. While there is no serious concern regarding a potential shutdown at this point, the current debate is over the length of a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep government agencies funded after September 30. More conservative Republicans in the House are pressuring Speaker Ryan to move forward on a long-term CR that would provide funding through March, 2017 to avoid action on a single omnibus funding measure in a Lame Duck session after the November elections. At this point, both House and Senate leadership appear to be rejecting this approach, and we are likely to see a CR that provides funding through early December so that the FY 2017 appropriations process can be completed by the current Congress.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

We continued to monitor action on Congressman Murphy's (R-PA) H.R. 2646, the *Helping Families in Mental Crisis Act*. Amongst other provisions, H.R. 2646 would help make available needed psychiatric, psychological, and supportive services for individuals with mental illness and families in crisis. After months of negotiations between Republicans and Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee over concerns regarding privacy protections and court-ordered treatment, the bill once again garnered bipartisan support, and it was approved in July by the overwhelming vote of 422-2. The proposal has now been forwarded to the Senate, where Senators Cassidy (R-LA) and Murphy (D-CT) are championing the bipartisan S. 2680, the *Mental Health Reform Act*. The Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) approved S. 2680 in March.

DRUG ABUSE – OPIOD EPIDEMIC

Last May, the House approved a package of 18 bills intended to combat prescription opioid and heroin abuse, including H.R. 5046, the *Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Reduction Act of 2016*. The measure includes provisions to authorize the Department of Justice to award grants to state and local governments such as the County to provide a broad array of opioid abuse services. Following the House action, a joint conference committee was convened to negotiate a final bill with the Senate, which had passed opioid abuse-related legislation earlier in the year as S. 524, the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act*. The resulting conference agreement was approved by the House as S. 524 in July by a vote of 407-5, and subsequently approved by the Senate by a vote of 92-2. President Obama signed the legislation into law on July 22.

TANF REAUTHORIZATION

Last spring, the House Ways and Means Committee approved a package bills intended to strengthen the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and better help recipients move to work. Amongst other proposals, these included:

- *H.R. 2952, the Improving Employment Outcomes of TANF Recipients Act*, which would replace incentive payments to States with grants based on increased employment, job retention, and earnings of former recipients;
- *H.R. 2990, the Accelerating Individuals into the Workforce Act*, which would encourage employer-led partnerships to help people move from welfare to work; and,
- *H.R. 5169, the What Works to Move Welfare Recipients into Jobs Act*, which would strengthen research and evaluation to document successful policies meeting the purposes of TANF.

During her trip to Washington, DC the first week of September, we arranged and participated in meetings for Supervisor Wolf to meet

with staff of both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee to discuss these and other proposals in relation to the County's policy on TANF.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

We also arranged and participated in meetings for Supervisor Wolf with both the Majority and Minority Counsels for the Senate Judiciary Committee to discuss legislative efforts to address elder abuse. In July, Committee Chairman Grassley (R-IA) introduced S. 3270, the *Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act*. The measure, which has bipartisan support, would expand education, prevention and prosecution tools to reduce crimes against seniors and to bring perpetrators to justice. Earlier this year, Chairman Grassley's committee held a hearing entitled, *Protecting Older Americans from Financial Exploitation*, and he indicated he intended to schedule action on S. 3270 this fall. In the House, Congressman Cartwright (D-PA) recently introduced H.R. 5018, the *Elder Protection and Abuse Prevention Act*, which would amend the Older Americans Act to authorize Federal assistance to adult protective services programs, including grants for elder abuse and neglect screening.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

We contacted the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to reiterate our advocacy for full funding of the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program in their respective versions of the *FY 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill. When the House committee approved its bill, it included \$480 million for PILT, a \$28 million increase over the previous year to ensure full funding for FY 2017 payments. The Senate followed suit when it subsequently marked up and approved its Interior spending measure. The Department of Interior recently announced that Santa Barbara County is receiving \$1,823,636 from PILT for FY 2016, a \$170,000 increase.

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