

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

June 30, 2017

FY 2018 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

This past week, several House Appropriations Subcommittees finally began work on the appropriations bills to fund the Federal government in FY 2018. Of significance to the County, the Subcommittees on Agriculture, Energy and Water, and Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) each held markups of their respective draft bills, and it is anticipated that the full Appropriations Committee will take them up after the July 4 recess. However, with the start of the Fiscal Year just three months away, no substantive action so far in the Senate, and the August recess looming beforehand, alternative strategies are beginning to surface. For instance, there is some support for a plan to write one large appropriations package and pass it before the recess. This would be an unorthodox approach and is not necessarily supported by the appropriators, and while those advocating it think there would be less need to compromise in such a bill, it would still be necessary to garner enough Democratic votes in the Senate to avoid a filibuster. Further complicating the process is a looming fight over raising the debt limit, which Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has indicated must be raised by the end of September.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT REPEAL

On June 22, the Senate Republican Leadership released its discussion draft of legislation to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as H.R. 1628, the *Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017*. At the time, Senate Majority Leader McConnell was confident that the proposal could be brought to the Senate floor for a vote before the 4th of July recess, but it quickly came under fire from a broad spectrum of Republican senators, both for the manner in which it was drafted in secrecy, and on several substantive issues. Amongst other issues, some conservative members objected that it maintained too many of the ACA's characteristics, and moderate senators expressed concerns over the impacts on Medicaid programs in their states. While it was touted as

an improvement over the House-passed bill, when the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its analysis of the proposal, one of the most glaring findings was that it would increase the number of uninsured Americans by 22 million over a decade, only slightly less than the 23 million projected for the House bill. The proposed floor vote was cancelled, and Majority Leader McConnell has been scrambling to find options for re-writing the bill to placate swing vote senators on both sides. He had hoped to have a new version to send to the CBO before the recess so that a vote could be held in early July, but that goal has so far been elusive.

DRUG COURT TREATMENT FUNDING

Late last year the County Probation Department submitted a proposal to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for funding under the *FY 2017 Grants to Expand Substance Abuse Treatment Capacity in Adult Drug Courts* competitive grants. As soon as Congressman Carbajal was sworn in on January 3, we started working with him and his staff to garner support for the County's application. Congressman Carbajal submitted a letter of support to SAMHSA on January 13, and we worked with his office throughout the process. On June 6, SAMHSA announced that it was awarding \$975,000 to the Probation Department to provide alcohol and drug treatment to participants in the Veteran's Treatment Court.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES

The FY 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act signed into law in early May included \$465 million for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke has now announced the allocation of that funding to more than 1,900 local governments around the country, including an allocation of \$1,860,377 to the County of Santa Barbara. This represents a slightly more than two percent increase over the amount awarded to the County for FY 2016.

TANF – SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT

During his advocacy trip to Washington, DC last winter, Supervisor Lavagnino met with the House Ways and Means Committee to discuss its efforts aimed at improving the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. On June 15, the Committee marked up and approved H.R. 2842, the *Accelerating Individuals into the Workforce Act*. The measure would authorize the use of demonstration projects to test the effectiveness of subsidized employment for TANF recipients. H.R. 2842 was subsequently approved by the full House on June 23, and will now be referred to the Senate for consideration.

GUN VIOLENCE

We provided County staff with Congressman Carbajal's H.R. 2598, the *Gun Violence Restraining Order Act of 2017*, which is intended to help provide family members of individuals who they fear are dangers to themselves or others with new tools to prevent gun violence. The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee, and Senator Feinstein has introduced companion legislation as S. 1212. The proposal was introduced to coincide with the third anniversary of the shootings in Isla Vista.

ELDER JUSTICE

We contacted the four House committees of jurisdiction to advocate in support of reauthorization of the Elder Justice Act. Congressman King (R-NY) has introduced H.R. 2639, the *Elder Justice Reauthorization Act*, which would provide a simple reauthorization of the Act through 2019. Citing the increase in both the elderly population and elder abuse related incidences in the County, we urged the committees to include more substantive provisions in the legislation, such as improving the capacity of local adult protective services programs to respond effectively to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults. We also asked the local Congressional delegation to support the County's advocacy for reauthorization of the Act. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on H.R. 2639.