

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 4, 2018

FALL SCHEDULE

Congress returned from the Labor Day recess with a long to-do list for the period leading up to the scheduled adjournment in early October. High on the list are votes on spending bill conference reports, the farm bill, opioid legislation, and in the Senate a vote on the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Other high-priority issues include aviation programs, election security, the proposed border wall, the new trade agreement with Mexico, and other trade issues resulting from the Trump Administration's actions. A Lame Duck Session of Congress after the November elections is planned to finish up the year's work.

FEDERAL BUDGET

House and Senate leaders are continuing to implement a strategy of packaging together individual appropriations bills into "minibuses" to expedite consideration and maintain the momentum on funding measures. The Senate has passed nine out of twelve of the individual funding bills, which is a dramatic improvement compared to last year when none of the individual bills passed the Senate. The House has passed six of the bills and will continue work on appropriations throughout September.

President Trump recently demanded that his immigration proposals be included as a precondition for enacting the FY 2019 appropriations and he also raised the specter of a Federal government closure if agreement cannot be reached. In addition, both parties in Congress are expected to seek opportunities in the funding process to position themselves for the November elections, which could delay action on some of the bills. Although some of the appropriations measures could still be enacted before the October 1 start of the new fiscal year, a Continuing Resolution to provide interim funding for many agencies will be necessary to allow Congress time to complete the bills.

IMMIGRATION RESOLUTIONS

Following your Board's actions in August, we wrote to President Trump to provide the adopted resolutions that proclaim: 1) opposition to the separation of families and solidarity with communities affected by current national immigration policy, and 2) support for immigrants and refugees who seek opportunity or asylum in the United States according to established legal processes and those sworn to uphold such legal processes. We also provided copies to DHS Secretary Nielsen and our local delegation. Several related bills have been introduced but not scheduled for action.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As the recess ended, we joined other national stakeholders in lobbying Congress for FY 2019 funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program. HOME is the only Federal block grant program designed to create and preserve affordable housing to meet specific local needs, and the County uses it to provide additional services, capital improvements, and new affordable housing, as well as to address homelessness. The House *FY 2019 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD)* spending bill proposes to cut HOME funding by \$162 million and we urged conference committee members to support the Senate language to keep the current level of funding at \$1.362 billion. We also continue to advocate for other HUD programs of importance to the County, including CDBG, homeless assistance, Housing for People with AIDS, and elderly housing.

FY 2018 allocations for housing and community development programs were announced by HUD in May after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act. Santa Barbara County was allocated \$1,190,279 in CDBG funding, and \$1,038,021 under the HOME Program.

FARM BILL/NUTRITION PROGRAMS

As negotiations on a final 2018 Farm Bill began in earnest, we joined with NACo and other stakeholders to urge conference committee members to protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and continue strong support for agriculture and conservation programs.

The House-passed Farm Bill, H.R. 2, the *Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018*, includes new work and job training requirements for recipients of food aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We urged conferees to oppose provisions that would reduce eligibility and cut benefits to needy families who rely on SNAP and include the highest possible authorization level for the program in the final version of the bill.

Enactment of a 2018 Farm Bill before the end of the month is a top priority of Congressional leaders. A formal conference committee meeting is scheduled for this week.

340B DRUG PRICING PROGRAM

We contacted the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Representative Carbajal to reiterate the County's support for the 340B Drug Pricing Program reminding them that it saves taxpayer dollars while at the same time enhancing and expanding patient care.

The Government Accounting Office released a report in July that found that HRSA's oversight was not ensuring compliance with 340B Program requirements and criticized compliance with the prohibition on duplicate discounts for drugs prescribed to Medicaid beneficiaries. The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on 340B in July that included 15 bills that have been introduced in the House, many of which are hostile to the program and seek to provide additional regulations or reduce the scope of the program.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Health Resources and Services Administration announced FY 2018 funding awards for Health Center Quality Improvements programs in August. We were informed that the

County Public Health Department was awarded \$72,818 to continue to improve quality, efficiency, and the effectiveness of healthcare delivery.

SCAAP REAUTHORIZATION

We contacted the Senate Judiciary Committee to advocate in support of Senator Flake's (R-AZ) S. 745, which would reauthorize and update the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). We also urged Senator Feinstein, who is the Ranking Minority Member of the committee, and Senator Harris to consider cosponsoring the bill. S. 745 would amend SCAAP to clarify that individuals charged with a crime should be counted – which would benefit local governments such as the County - and expand it to include reimbursements for medical expenses associated with the incarceration of criminal undocumented immigrants. The Department of Justice previously allowed reimbursements for non-adjudicated undocumented immigrants in local jails, and when it discontinued doing so, the County's SCAAP payments fell by over 58%. Santa Barbara County received \$318,334 under SCAAP for FY 2016. FY 2017 allocations still have not been processed by the Administration.

LOS PADRES WILDERNESS

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing on Senator Harris' S. 1959, the *Central Coast Heritage Protection Act* on August 22. The legislation would expand Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations in the Los Padres National Forest, upper Piru Creek, upper Sespe Creek, and upper Matilija Creek. A House version has been introduced by Representative Carbajal as H.R. 4072. Although the hearing raises the possibility of Senate action on the bill before the end of the year, the House is not expected to schedule it for a vote.