

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 1, 2019

BUDGET

President Trump signed H.R. 4378 into law on September 27 to extend current funding levels for the federal government to November 21 in order to provide more time to complete the FY 2020 appropriations bills. In addition to providing funding beyond the October 1 start of the new fiscal year, the Continuing Resolution provides short-term extensions for the Federally Qualified Health Centers Program, the National Flood Insurance Program, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.

The Continuing Resolution is necessary because none of the twelve annual appropriations bills have become law yet. A budget deal was agreed to in August that set the overall spending limits for FY 2020, but Congress must still enact the bills that allocate the funding to specific programs and agencies. In addition, both parties are seeking to use the funding bills as vehicles for enacting various policy riders, which carries with it the potential for conflict in the future when interim funding expires.

Negotiations on the final appropriations measures will continue throughout the next five weeks. A further CR to allow final negotiations to be completed is likely to be needed through at least early December. It is unknown how the opening of an impeachment inquiry by House Democrats will impact future legislation, but it seems likely to spill over into the legislative process before the end of the year.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its draft of the *FY 2020 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (THUD)* on September 19. This is part of the effort by Senate Republicans to draft their versions of

as many of the twelve individual appropriations bills as possible so that they can enter into negotiations with the House, which passed its bills earlier in the year.

The THUD legislation includes funding for several housing and community development programs that we advocate for in coordination with NACo and other stakeholders. These include \$3.3 billion for Community Development Block Grants (level with last year); \$1.3 billion for the HOME Investment Partnership Program (level with last year); and an increase of \$164 million for Homeless Assistance Grants to a total of \$2.8 billion.

INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the *FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill last week. The legislation as drafted by the Committee would fully fund the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program, continue funding for EPA's State and Local Air Quality programs, but does not include language from the House version to prohibit new oil and gas lease sales on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf in FY 2020. We are continuing to urge the House and Senate to address these County priorities as a final version of this bill is drafted in the coming weeks.

AGRICULTURE/NUTRITION FUNDING

The Senate Appropriations Committee also approved its draft of the *FY 2020 Agriculture Appropriations Act* on September 19. Some of the key programs funded in the bill include: \$6 billion for the Women's, Infants and Children nutrition program (full funding); \$69 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (full funding for declining enrollment); and \$1.028 billion for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (\$16 million above

the FY2019 enacted level and continues programs to control or eradicate plant and animal pests).

BANKING FOR CANNABIS BUSINESSES

The House passed H.R. 1595, the *SAFE Banking Act*, on September 25, which would create protections for depository institutions that provide financial services to legitimate cannabis-related businesses and service providers. The bill has been referred to the Senate Banking Committee, which also has a Senate version introduced by Senator Merkley's (D-OR) as S. 1200 for possible consideration. Senate Banking Committee Chair Crapo (R-ID) has expressed support for the concept but indicated that he might draft an original bill, rather than taking up the *SAFE Banking Act*.

INFRASTRUCTURE RESILIENCE

On September 19, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee marked up H.R. 3779, the *Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act of 2019*. This legislation would create a low-interest loan program for states to fund pre-disaster mitigation projects, which greatly reduce the risks and costs of natural disasters. Revolving Fund loans would be available for projects that minimize the risks of wildfires, earthquakes, floods, storm surges, tornadoes, and other events deemed catastrophic by FEMA. There is bipartisan support for the bill proceeding to the House floor for a vote, but no comparable legislation has been introduced in the Senate yet.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

We are continuing to advocate for federal programs that support the health and independence of the elderly through the Older Americans Act. H.R. 4334, the *Dignity in Aging Act*, was approved by the House Education and Labor Committee on September 18 and would authorize a 7 percent funding increase for Older Americans Act programs in the first year, then annual 6 percent increases in the following years. It also includes changes to programs to better help aging Americans live independently and with dignity. We are urging

the Senate to also take action to reauthorize these programs.

ELDER ABUSE

The Senate Committee on Finance held a hearing in late July entitled, *Promoting Elder Justice: A Call for Reform*, in anticipation of possible introduction of legislation to reform and improve the Elder Justice Act. We contacted House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over the legislation and our local delegation to express the County's support for federal resources to enable it to respond effectively to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults - as well as to enhance elder abuse prosecution and prevention programs - and urged them to expedite action on the measure. The Elder Justice Act was first enacted in 2010 and is due for reauthorization. We are coordinating our advocacy with stakeholder groups such as the Elder Justice Coalition.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

We are continuing to advocate for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which provides funding to counties to offset lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal lands within their jurisdictions. The County received \$1,937,510 for its most recent annual allocation of PILT funds in June. While Congress has recently provided funding for PILT through annual appropriations bills, the County supports authorizing legislation to provide a long-term, sustainable future for this program. Senator Wyden (D-OR) recently introduced S. 2480, the *PILT Reauthorization Act of 2019*, which would provide a ten-year authorization for the program, with mandatory funding. We have urged the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and our Senators to support the legislation and also have urged action on similar legislation in the House.

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