

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 28, 2020

COVID-19 RELIEF LEGISLATION

Time is running out for enactment of another pandemic relief package before Congress adjourns to campaign in October. The release of the *March to Common Ground* compromise proposal two weeks ago by the bipartisan House Problem Solvers Caucus generated a great deal of attention, but Speaker Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin have only recently agreed to restart negotiations. Administration negotiators have stated several times that they would support a bill around \$1.5 trillion in size, which is substantially smaller than the roughly \$3.4 trillion House-passed *HEROES Act*. House Democratic leadership is reportedly drafting an alternative bill that is around \$2.4 trillion in size and that bill could be brought up for a vote in the House this week.

FISCAL YEAR 2021 FUNDING

The Senate is expected to pass H.R. 8337, a short-term Continuing Appropriations Resolution, this week in time for President Trump to sign it into law before the start of the new fiscal year on October 1. The House passed the bill on September 24, and it includes provisions to fund the federal government through December 11. Although the House has passed ten of the twelve annual funding bills, the Senate Appropriations Committee has moved much slower and has not drafted any of the bills yet.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION

We are working in coordination with Senator Feinstein's staff in support of her S. 4431, the *Emergency Wildfire and Public Safety Act*. This legislation would provide additional funding and policy authorizations to help reduce wildfire dangers, including provisions to create more resilient communities and energy grids and to allow FEMA hazard mitigation funding to be used for the installation of fire-resistant wires and infrastructure. The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a

hearing on the bill on September 16. Representative Carbajal is a cosponsor of the House companion bill, H.R. 7978.

FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTERS

Throughout this year, we have advocated for Congress to pass legislation to reauthorize the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) program. The pending Continuing Resolution includes provisions to extend this program through December 11 so that Congress can address this in the Lame Duck Session. In addition, the House-passed H.R. 6800, the *HEROES Act*, includes \$7.6 billion to expand COVID-19 and other health care services at health centers such as FQHCs.

CLEAN ENERGY

We advocated support for H.R. 4447, the *Clean Economy Jobs and Innovation Act*, in anticipation of the bill's consideration by the House last week. This legislation includes numerous provisions to promote the development of clean energy, increase the energy efficiency of buildings, and support carbon capture and greenhouse gas reduction. We noted the County's support for promoting economic stability and environmental protection and stewardship through participation in the growing green economy. This includes economic incentives that promote the use of renewable energy and cost-effective strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy conservation. Now that H.R. 4447 has been passed by the House, it will need to be merged with a similar Senate bill proposed by Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair Murkowski (R-AK), the *American Energy Innovation Act*.

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