

# Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

November 2, 2020

## COVID-19 RELIEF LEGISLATION

Discussions continued throughout October over a possible fifth pandemic relief package. The negotiations have been extremely volatile, with both sides seemingly walking away from the table at times, only to return almost immediately for additional behind-the-scenes talks. Last week, the House and the Senate adjourned until after the November elections, leaving pandemic relief for possible consideration in a Lame Duck Session.

Several relief proposals are currently on the table. House Democrats passed H.R. 925 last month, which is a \$2.2 trillion version of the *HEROES Act*. H.R. 925 includes many provisions from the original \$3.4 trillion *Heroes Act*, with costs reduced by either dropping provisions or scaling them back. The bill would provide an additional \$438 billion for state, local and tribal fiscal relief. It would also extend through next January the additional \$600 per week federal unemployment benefit, provide another round of \$1,200 tax rebates, increase food aid, and fund another round of forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans to small businesses.

Trump Administration negotiators, led by Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, have made a \$1.9 trillion offer that would include at least \$300 billion in additional state and local government fiscal relief. At the same time, Senate Republicans are making clear their preference for a much smaller package. During October, Senator Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) attempted to bring up a bill that would have given the Small Business Administration \$258 billion for a second round of PPP loans and another bill that would have provided about \$500 billion for expanded unemployment benefits, assistance to schools, and vaccine development. Both bills failed to achieve the 60-vote threshold needed to proceed under Senate rules.

## TANF REAUTHORIZATION

We are continuing to advocate for reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program during the upcoming Lame Duck Session of Congress. The program has been extended through December 11 and we are requesting enactment of a multi-year reauthorization for TANF that would increase funding for child care, job training and other aspects of the program and also provide California more flexibility in the administration of the program. We are coordinating our advocacy with NACo and CWDA to address the overly rigid Work Participation Rate requirements that were put into place by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

## LAME DUCK SESSION

Congress will return after election day for a Lame Duck Session of Congress to finish up critical legislation before the end of the year. A central task will be enactment of the twelve annual appropriation bills needed to fund the federal government. A short-term Continuing Resolution has been enacted to provide interim appropriations to keep the government open 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.

There is intense speculation about whether other bills will be attached to the appropriations legislation to get them enacted this year. In recent days, Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) and President Trump have both stated their intention to enact a COVID-19 relief package during the post-election session and an omnibus approach to these two issues seems likely.

*Don Gilchrest*  
*Thomas Walters & Associates, Inc.*