

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

July 7, 2021

INVEST ACT

On July 1, the House of Representatives passed Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair DeFazio's (D-OR) H.R. 3684, the *Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST in America Act)*, which would reauthorize and expand federal surface transportation programs and provide additional resources for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. We are continuing to work in coordination with other local government stakeholders to advocate for this funding to speed the recovery from the pandemic and transform the economy.

The *Invest in America Act* includes \$547 billion for federal surface transportation programs over the next five years, which would be a substantial increase over current funding levels. The funding would be allocated through a combination of transportation formulas and grant programs. In addition to advocating for increased road and bridge funding, we also expressed support for provisions in the bill to provide \$4 billion for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, \$8.3 billion to reduce carbon pollution, and \$6.2 billion for disaster mitigation and resiliency improvements.

The legislation also includes water infrastructure provisions that would provide significant support for the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Fund programs. Other major categories of water funding in the bill include:

- \$45 billion to fully replace lead service lines throughout the nation,
- \$2 billion for projects to capture, treat, or reuse sewer overflows or stormwater,
- \$2.5 billion for state water pollution control programs, and

- \$1 billion toward alternative water source and water recycling projects.

The Senate has been developing its own versions of the transportation and water bills. Once the Senate passes its legislation, House and Senate leaders will be tasked with negotiating a final version.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEAL

On June 24, President Biden and a bipartisan group of Senators announced an agreement to move forward with legislation to fund a total of \$1.2 trillion in infrastructure over eight years. The package proposes \$579 billion in new spending (above current baseline levels) in a framework of overall spending amounts, with most details of how the package would be implemented still to be determined. A few of the infrastructure categories of interest to the County are:

- \$109 billion for Roads/Bridges
- \$49 billion for Transit
- \$66 billion for Rail
- \$55 billion for Water Infrastructure
- \$47.2 billion for Resiliency
- \$7.5 billion for an EV Charging Network
- \$65 billion for Broadband Infrastructure
- \$16 billion for Abandoned Wells/Mines

The Senate bipartisan group is reportedly working on translating the agreement into legislative text, which will spell out in greater detail how the funding would be allocated. Senate Majority Leader Schumer will then have to decide when to bring it to the full Senate for a vote.

FY 2022 INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS

The House Appropriations Committee approved its version of the *FY 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act* on July 1. This legislation funds key

environmental protection and conservation programs at the Department of Interior and EPA. Among the programs included in the bill that we are advocating for on behalf of the County are:

- The Payments in Lieu of Taxes program,
- EPA's State and Local Air Quality programs,
- Full mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund,
- The National Endowment for the Arts, and
- Cleanup/removal of abandoned oil and gas wells.

Committee passage of the Interior-Environment bill continues efforts by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to accelerate their work to draft the twelve annual appropriations bills that fund the federal government. House leaders aim to achieve passage by the full House of most of the appropriations measures before the August recess.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

We are continuing to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform including protections provided under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and a pathway for permanent status. The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on June 15 to receive testimony on H.R. 6, the *American Dream and Promise Act of 2021*, which was passed by the House on March 18. Judiciary Committee Chair Durbin (D-IL) has also reintroduced S. 264, the *Dream Act of 2021*, with Senator Graham (R-SC) as the principal co-sponsor. Although there appears to be bipartisan support for enacting protections for Dreamers, Republican Senators are also insisting on stronger border security measures and it is not clear if these differing viewpoints can be reconciled.

Earlier in the year, President Biden proposed a more comprehensive overhaul of immigration laws, which has been introduced by Senator Menendez (D-NJ) as S. 348 and by Representative Sanchez (D-CA) as H.R. 1177. Under the legislation, immigrants who were in the Country as of January 1 would become eligible for legal permanent residence after five years and for U.S. citizenship after an additional three years. Participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program could apply for a green card immediately. The proposed legislation includes other revisions to the immigration process and an increase in refugee admissions. The legislation has so far been opposed by most Republicans as too broad and lacking in border security measures.

PILT FUNDING

We are continuing to work in coordination with the National Association of Counties in support of a long-term authorization for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program. PILT payments offset lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal lands and ensure support for critical local services. On June 24, the Department of Interior announced the fiscal year 2021 allocations under the PILT Program, and the County of Santa Barbara is receiving \$ 2,007,496 this year.

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