

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

March 10, 2008

FY 2009 BUDGET PROPOSAL

After President Bush released his FY 2009 Budget Proposal in February, we forwarded materials provided at Federal agency briefings of significance to the County's responsibilities to County staff for analysis, including Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, and Justice. Proposed cuts once again run the gamut from health and housing to public safety, first responders, and illegal immigration offsets. While many of the proposed reductions are considered "dead on arrival" due to Congressional opposition and President Bush's lame duck status, budgetary pressures will mandate ongoing advocacy efforts to protect those programs. The House and Senate Budget Committees have begun work on the *FY 2009 Budget Resolution*, which sets the broad parameters for the appropriations process.

FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

We worked with our local Congressional delegation and Senators Feinstein and Boxer regarding support for specific funding proposals through the FY 2009 appropriations process. With the continuing scrutiny of the earmark or "members' request" process, both individual offices and the various appropriations subcommittees are demanding a much more strenuous justification process and we worked closely with County staff to generate and provide all needed information in a timely manner to meet the respective deadlines of these various offices. We arranged meetings for Chairman Carbajal to advocate the requests during his trip to Washington, and for staff to advocate the requests during the NACo Legislative Conference. There is some talk about a one year moratorium on earmarks, but at this point that has not stopped members from submitting requests to the respective House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees, and hearings are currently

being held in anticipation of drafting the various spending bills later this spring.

IMMIGRATION IMPACTS

We urged the Senate Judiciary Committee to expedite action on Senator Feinstein's S. 2587, the *SCAAP Reimbursement Protection Act*, and S. 2588, the *Ensure Timely SCAAP Reimbursement Act*. S. 2587 would broaden SCAAP to allow for reimbursements for incarcerating illegal aliens *charged* with a crime, reversing an Administration policy interpretation that caused the County's SCAAP payments to plunge from \$1.04 million in FY 2001 to \$358,424 in FY 2003. S. 2588 would require that SCAAP reimbursements be distributed no later than 120 days after the end of the annual application period.

MEDICAID FUNDING

We contacted the House and Senate Committees of jurisdiction to advocate in support of efforts to include language in the stimulus package to extend the moratorium on the proposed rule issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to cut Medicaid payments to public hospitals and safety net providers by nearly \$4 billion over 5 years. The current moratorium will expire on May 25. We also asked them to broaden the moratorium to prevent CMS from enacting regulations that would narrow the definition of Medicaid outpatient services, restricting the utilization of County expenditures as a match for Federal Medicaid funding. While the stimulus package signed into law by President Bush did not include the extension, we are continuing to advocate in support of efforts to do so.

SCHIP REAUTHORIZATION

We urged members of our local Congressional delegation to vote to override President Bush's most recent veto of legislation to reauthorize and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The vote

to override the veto of H.R. 3963, the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*, was 260-152, short of the needed 2/3 majority. While the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act included provisions extending existing SCHIP authorization through March 2009, Congressional advocates of the program have indicated there may be further attempts at a broader reauthorization this year.

METHAMPHETAMINES

We continued to advocate in support of additional Federal resources for local interdiction, prevention, and treatment strategies targeting the methamphetamine problem, as well as for stricter penalties and controls on meth precursors. In February, the Judiciary Committee discharged Senator Feinstein's S. 2071, the *Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act*, and it was subsequently approved by the full Senate. It is currently pending before the House Judiciary Committee.

MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS

We continued to advocate in support of H.R. 3992, the *Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Reauthorization and Improvement Act*, urging our local Congressional delegation to support the measure when it was considered on the House floor. The measure would provide grants for improved mental health treatment services for mentally ill offenders. It was approved by the full House and referred to the Senate. The Senate has not yet scheduled action on its companion measure, Senator Domenici's S. 2304.

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION

In anticipation of the joint conference to negotiate the final version of the Farm Bill, we contacted the respective Agriculture Committees to reiterate support for pest detection and surveillance programs. We also advocated the County's policies regarding improvements to the Food Stamps program. While pre-conference negotiations are being held both between the House and Senate and with the Administration, there is considerable disagreement on the overall spending level,

and on new tax revenues or funding reductions to offset new spending.

We participated in meetings with members of the California Agricultural Commissioners Association with the State's Congressional delegation to advocate in support of funding for County pest detection efforts in the state, including dog teams to enhance inspections. We also urged the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees to fund the requests in the FY 2009 spending bill.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

We contacted members of the Senate HELP and House Education and Labor Committees to express concerns expressed by the County regarding provisions in the *American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Restoration Act* that would unduly burden the County as an employer. The legislation was introduced in the Senate by Senator Harkin (D-IA) as S. 1881, and in the House by Congressman Hoyer (D-MD) as H.R. 3195. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on either bill.

HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS

We were alerted by our Congressional delegation of Secretary Chertoff's announcement of the availability of FY 2008 State and Local Homeland Security grants, and we apprised County staff and obtained the Application Guidance document for distribution. Applications are due by May 1.

SOCIAL SERVICES: 2-1-1 SYSTEMS

We contacted the House Energy and Commerce and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committees to reiterate support for the *Calling for 2-1-1 Act*, which would authorize matching grants to implement and maintain 2-1-1 systems. The proposal was introduced in the House by Congresswoman Eshoo (D-CA) and in the Senate by Senator Clinton (D-NY). Hearings have not been scheduled on either bill.

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