

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

June 10, 2008

FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

As Congress returned from its Memorial Day recess, we continued to advocate the County's project and programmatic funding priorities in anticipation of upcoming action on the FY 2009 appropriations process. After weeks of delay, House and Senate conferees finally reached agreement on the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, which sets the caps for non-emergency discretionary spending provided through the 12 annual appropriations bills. The House and Senate both adopted the Budget Resolution last week, and the House Appropriations Committee released its tentative schedule for subcommittee and full committee markups of the 12 bills, set to begin June 11 and continue through July 23.

HEALTH CARE

We contacted the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to reiterate the County's support for legislation to provide equitable reimbursement for Medicare services it provides as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). We specifically asked them to take action on the *Medicare Access to Community Health Centers (MATCH) Act*. Introduced in the House by Congressman Weiner (D-NY) as H.R. 2897 and in the Senate by Senator Bingaman (D-NM) as S. 2188, the measure would establish new rates for FQHCs and increase those rates annually based on the Medicare Economic Index. While action has not been scheduled on either bill, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus (D-MT) has included language to increase the reimbursement for FQHCs in legislation he introduced last Friday as S. 3101, the *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act*. The measure, which is intended to prevent a mandatory 10.6% decrease in Medicare payments to physicians, would also require the Government Accountability Office to study the adequacy of the current FQHC Medicare payment system. It is scheduled to be taken up by the full Senate this week.

We urged House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Dingell (D-MI) to schedule full committee consideration of Congresswoman Capps' H.R. 1014, the *Heart Disease Education, Analysis, Research, and Treatment (HEART) for Women Act*. Supervisor Wolf testified at a Congressional hearing in support of the legislation last year, and it was subsequently marked up and approved by the Subcommittee on Health. We also contacted members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee to advocate in support of action on the Senate version of the proposal, Senator Stabenow's (D-MI) S. 573.

HOMELESSNESS

We contacted the Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to advocate in support of action this year on legislation to reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, citing the fact that there are approximately 6,300 homeless adults and children in Santa Barbara County, and the valuable resources that the Act provides local governments to address homelessness. In the Senate, the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs has approved S. 1518, the *Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act*, and it is on the Legislative Calendar pending consideration by the full Senate. Companion legislation has not been introduced in the Senate, and we urged Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank (D-MA) to take action to reauthorize McKinney-Vento this year.

CLEAN AIR

We asked the House and Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittees to reject the Administration's proposed cut of \$31.2 million to EPA's Section 103 and Section 105 grants to State and local agencies. Senator Feinstein chairs the Senate subcommittee, and we specifically urged her to fund the programs at the highest possible level, citing the

importance of this funding to the Air Pollution Control District's mandated efforts, including the fine particulate monitoring network. The House subcommittee is scheduled to begin work on its version of the FY 2009 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill on June 11.

As a follow-up to Supervisor Carbajal's meetings during his January advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., we continued to monitor Congressional activity on legislation to address concerns regarding marine vessel emissions. Senator Boxer chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and on May 21, the committee approved her bill, S. 1499, the *Marine Vessel Emissions Reduction Act*. The bill is currently pending issuance of the committee's report to accompany it.

OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF

We contacted members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House Natural Resources Committee to reiterate the County's support for the existing moratorium on Outer Continental Shelf activities off of the Southern California coast, and urged them to take action on the *California Ocean and Coastal Protection Act*. Introduced by Senators Boxer and Feinstein as S. 151 and by Representative Capps (D-CA) as H.R. 2918, the measure would permanently prohibit oil and gas leasing off the coast of the State of California. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on either measure. We also urged the House and Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittees to include language extending the moratorium in their FY 2009 spending bill.

METHAMPHETAMINES

We continued to advocate in support of additional resources for local interdiction, prevention, and treatment strategies targeting the methamphetamine problem. Just before the Memorial Day recess, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved Senator Feinstein's S. 1210, the *Drug Endangered Children Act*, which would extend the DEC grant program. The measure is now awaiting full Senate

consideration. The House companion bill, Congressman Cardoza's (D-CA) H.R. 1199, was approved last year.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

We lobbied the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of Title XX Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding, emphasizing its importance to a variety of programs in the County, including IHSS and Child Welfare Services. We specifically urged them to reject the Administration's proposal to reduce SSBG by \$500 million. We also encouraged them to adequately fund Older Americans programs in the *FY 2009 Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill, including the Agency on Aging, supportive services and senior centers, and grants to States for protection of vulnerable older Americans. The House Labor/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee is scheduled to take action on its FY 2009 spending bill on June 19.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES

In anticipation of floor action on H.R. 3058, the *Public Land Communities Transition Act*, we contacted the members of our local Congressional delegation to urge their support for the measure, which would guarantee funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program at \$350 million, an increase of 65%. The County received \$1,009,347 as its PILT allocation for FY 2007, and it would increase by approximately \$656,075 to \$1.67 million under the bill. Last week, H.R. 3058 was considered by the full House on the suspension calendar, which is intended to expedite the passage of non-controversial bills by barring amendments. While receiving a majority of votes, it failed to achieve the 2/3 approval necessary to pass on suspension, and was tabled.

EMPLOYER PROVIDED CELL PHONES

Several local governments have been penalized following IRS audits because they did not adequately track and report any "private" use of cell phones and PDAs issued to their employees as income to the employee. After Congressman Johnson (R-TX) introduced

legislation to address the issue as H.R. 5450, the *Modernize Our Bookkeeping In the Law for Employee's (MOBILE) Cell Phone Act*, we contacted the House Ways and Means Committee to advocate for the measure, citing the fact that it costs local governments \$1.86 to collect 12 cents for each non-business phone call an employee makes on one of these devices. The provisions of H.R. 5450 have been incorporated into H.R. 5719, the *Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act*, and a companion bill was introduced by Senator Kerry (D-MA) as S. 2668. We also urged the Senate Finance Committee to take action on Senator Kerry's bill.

AGRICULTURAL PESTS

We urged the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees to include funding for the California County Pest Detection Augmentation Program when they draft their respective versions of the *FY 2009 Agriculture Appropriations* bill, citing the County's almost \$1 billion agricultural industry, and the importance of additional resources for California counties to be able to adequately inspect for agricultural pests. The House subcommittee is scheduled to mark up its bill on June 19.

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