

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 14, 2008

FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

The FY 2009 appropriations process remains in limbo pending completion of the FY 2009 Budget Resolution, which sets the broad parameters for the spending bills. The House and Senate each passed their version of the resolution earlier in the year, but a conference committee to work out the final version had not been convened as conferees attempted to work out differences on an informal basis. However, yesterday it was announced that the formal conference would be convened by the end of the week, and that the House and Senate plan to take up the agreement before the weeklong Memorial Day recess. Meanwhile, we continue to advocate with Congresswoman Capps, Congressman Gallegly and Senators Boxer and Feinstein regarding the County's specific funding requests. Congressional leaders are indicating that few if any of the thirteen appropriations bill will be completed and sent to the President for consideration before the November elections, suggesting that Congress will return after the elections for a lame duck session.

MEDICAID FUNDING

We continue to advocate in support of extending the existing moratoria on a series of administrative actions by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that would adversely impact Medicaid funding to the County, including the proposed rules that would cut Medicaid payments to public safety net providers, reduce eligible case management services, and eliminate reimbursements for school-based MAA programs. After the House approved H.R. 5613, the *Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act*, by a veto-proof margin of 349-62, we contacted Senators Boxer and Feinstein to advocate in support of the legislation. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) originally intended to take H.R. 5613 directly to the Senate floor, and we urged our two Senators to lobby their colleagues in the

Senate to support it. However, opponents threatened to use procedural gambits to stall its consideration, and the bill's sponsors now intend to attach its provisions to the FY 2008 supplemental Defense appropriations measure currently being drafted. In anticipation of that action, we have contacted our local Delegation offices to reinforce support for including the moratoria in the supplemental appropriations bill.

IMMIGRATION IMPACTS

We contacted Congresswoman Capps and Congressman Gallegly to reiterate the importance to the County of Congresswoman Linda Sanchez' (D-CA) H.R. 1512. The measure 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. On May 8, H.R. 1512 was approved by the full House under suspension of the rules, which requires a veto-proof two-thirds majority. In the Senate, we met with Senator Feinstein's Judiciary Committee staff to advocate for her companion bill, S. 2587, the *SCAAP Reimbursement Protection Act*, and provided them with information about the impacts on the County to use in their efforts. Senator Feinstein is attempting to have the measure brought directly to the Senate floor for consideration before the Memorial Day break.

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION

As House and Senate conferees worked to negotiate on a final version of the 2008 Farm Bill, we continued to advocate for pest detection and surveillance programs with the respective Agriculture Committees, as well as the County's policies regarding improvements to the Food Stamps program. On May 8, the conference committee announced that a final agreement had been reached, and could be voted on as early as this week. The final bill

includes provisions regarding pest detection and surveillance similar to those contained in H.R. 667, the *Early Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Act*. It also would reauthorize the Food Stamp Act, including provisions to rename it the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; increase and index allowable deductions to expand program eligibility; increase penalties for fraud violations; and establish a competitive grant program to develop and test solutions to combat obesity. President Bush has threatened to veto the bill.

OFFENDER REENTRY

We closely monitored action on H.R. 1593, the *Second Chance Act*, and provided updates to the County regarding the bill's progress in case it is of value to the Probation Department. The measure authorizes grants for reentry of offenders into the community, and includes provisions to improve reentry planning and implementation. It was signed into law by President Bush on April 9.

ELDER ABUSE

In anticipation of committee action, we contacted the House Judiciary Committee to reiterate support for Congressman Emanuel's (D-IL) H.R. 1783, the *Elder Justice Act*, which would establish grant programs aimed at reducing physical abuse, financial exploitation and neglect of elderly people by family members or personnel in institutions and residential care facilities. We also asked Congresswoman Capps and Congressman Gallegly to support the measure, and to consider signing on as cosponsors. On May 6, the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security marked up and approved H.R. 1783, clearing it for consideration by the full committee.

PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT)

We urged the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to fund Payment in Lieu of Taxes at the fully authorized level of \$340 million in the *FY 2009 Interior Appropriations* bill. President Bush's budget request once again proposed reductions in PILT funding.

v Tom Walters v