

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 23, 2009

SANTA MARIA LEVEE

In late August, the County learned that a non-Federal cost-share for the improvements to the Santa Maria Levee would be required for the Federal funding obtained through the Army Corps of Engineers. We immediately contacted the Corps to protest this action, emphasizing the probability that it would kill the project. We worked with County staff and the City of Santa Maria's Washington, DC, representative to develop a coordinated plan to obtain an exception to this requirement. We also engaged the assistance of Congresswoman Capps' staff, who contacted the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to underscore the need for an exception to the policy requiring a cost-share. County staff provided an extensive rationale for the exception to the Corps, and on October 6 the Army Corps informed us that an exception to the cost-share requirement would be granted.

FY 2010 APPROPRIATIONS

Even though the new Federal Fiscal Year began on October 1, Congress is still working to complete action on many of the various appropriations bills that fund Federal agencies. As of this date, work has been completed on the FY 2010 *Agriculture, Energy and Water*, and *Homeland Security Appropriations* bills. Both the House and Senate have approved their respective versions of the *Interior and the Environment*, and *Transportation/HUD Appropriations* bills, and we continue to urge members of the joint House/Senate conference committees on those two measures to fund the County's priorities at the highest possible levels. The Senate has not yet completed floor action on the *Commerce, Justice, Science and Labor*, *HHS*, *Education Appropriations* bills, and there is a growing likelihood that they may be rolled into a single omnibus bill. The House and Senate have passed a Continuing Resolution to keep Federal agencies funded

through October 31, and it will be extended for those bills not completed by that date.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUNDING

We reiterated the County's emergency preparedness and response priorities as House and Senate conferees negotiated the final version of the *FY 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill. The conference agreement on the measure provides \$950 million for State Homeland Security and Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grants and \$810 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants, including \$420 million for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants. It increases EMPG by \$40 million to \$340 million, and provides \$100 million for the National Pre-disaster Mitigation Fund. It also includes \$60 million for grants to upgrade, equip, and construct Emergency Operations Centers. The House and Senate have both approved the conference agreement and it has been sent to President Obama for signature.

RYAN WHITE CARE ACT

We continued to advocate the County's support for the Ryan White CARE Act as the House and Senate moved forward on legislation to reauthorize the Act, which would sunset on October 31. On October 20, the full Senate approved its version as S. 1793, the *Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act*. The Senate-approved measure extends Ryan White through FY 2013, and authorizes a 5% increase for most programs under the Act. It includes provisions we advocated to continue the existing exemption to allow California to complete the transition to the reporting of data by patient name. The House Energy and Commerce Committee had approved its version of Ryan White reauthorization earlier in the month as H.R. 3792. However, on October 21, the House took up the Senate bill on its suspension calendar, and sent the legislation to President Obama for signature.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

We continue to monitor Congressional efforts on health care reform to provide up-to-date information to enable the County to assess potential impacts. On October 2, the Senate Finance Committee approved Chairman Baucus' (D-MT) version of health care reform legislation as S. 1796, the *America's Healthy Future Act of 2009*. The measure must now be merged with the bill previously approved by the Senate HELP Committee as S. 1679, the *Affordable Health Choices Act*, before the issue is debated by the full Senate. A similar situation exists in the House, where the actions of three separate committees on the House proposal, H.R. 3200, *America's Affordable Health Choices Act*, must also be merged into a single bill. At this point there is no concrete timeline for when either chamber will begin floor debate on health care reform.

MARINE VESSEL EMISSIONS

We contacted Chairwoman Boxer and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to reiterate the County's support for the inclusion of provisions contained in the House version of the legislation, H.R. 2454, the *American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009*, which would reduce emissions from ocean-going marine vessels. We also arranged for Supervisor Carbajal to meet on the issue with committee staff during a recent advocacy trip to Washington, DC. Chairwoman Boxer and Senator Kerry (D-MA) have now introduced S. 1733, the *Clean Jobs and American Power Act*, which is intended to create clean energy jobs, promote energy independence, and reduce global warming pollution. Committee hearings on S. 1722 are scheduled to begin on October 27.

WILDFIRE MITIGATION

We contacted Senator Feinstein and other members of the joint Senate/House conference committee on the *FY 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations* bill to advocate for the inclusion of provisions from the Senate version of the bill that would implement the *Federal Land Assistance Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act*, which would create a new funding account specifically for catastrophic emergency wildland fire suppression activities. Conferees are expected to meet on the Interior spending measure shortly.

CLEAN AIR FUNDING

We also urged House and Senate conferees on the *FY 2010 Interior and Environment Appropriations* bill to hold firm on the House-approved funding level for EPA's Section 103 and Section 105 grants to State and local agencies, citing the importance of this funding to the Air Pollution Control District's mandated efforts, including the fine particulate monitoring network. The House-passed version of the legislation proposed \$270 million for the grants, an increase of \$46 million over FY 2009, while the Senate version included \$227 million.

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