

Memorandum

TO: Members, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Cliff Berg, Legislative Advocate
Monica Miller, Legislative Advocate

RE: August 2009 Update

DATE: September 4, 2009

BUDGET

As we mentioned in our July update the budget had been resolved however there was much clean-up to be done during the last three weeks of session. The legislature returned on August 17th to begin to wrap up this year. Given all of the budget discussions and how dire the state is at this point, many do not have high expectations for a lot of activity. Both houses had their suspense file hearings the last week of August; many bills were kept with the committee due to the fiscal aspect and the general fund pressures these bills may cause. The legislature removed a total of 23 bills for the purpose of amending them and using them for additional budget clean-up. This has created a lot of friction with the republican caucuses and will lead to a difficult time in obtaining the necessary votes to pass many of these measures. Having said that, below is a list of what we know to date with one week left in the session, we will have more to report during our legislative committee meeting on September 14, 2009.

Prop. 1A – As you are aware, the legislature did adopt the “borrowing” of the Prop. 1A from the local governments, it will be a straight 8% take due back to the locals on June 30, 2013. The Trailer bill language had many problem that would essentially disallow us from borrowing, it was agreed that there would be a clean-up measure the last few weeks of session. The legislature did indeed identify two measures for the proposed clean-up. AB 185 and SB 67, this will allow them to take up whichever bill comes first and move it to the Governor as soon as possible. As of the writing of this update, the language is not available, but should be early next week.

Tranquillon Ridge – You may recall that this was a bill at the end of the budget discussions in July; however it did not receive the necessary votes in the Assembly. The issue is back; the language was amended into AB 1536 by Assembly Member Sam Blakeslee and is expected to be heard next week. We will keep you posted on the outcome of this discussion.

Highway User Tax Account (HUTA) – this is reported back in play, you may remember that this was the corner stone of the budget that was adopted by the Senate in July, however the Assembly Republican Caucus would not concur in the Senate amendments, this was led by the Assembly Republican Leader, our own Assembly Member Blakeslee. There are some rumors that this may be brought up again for a vote, but we believe most

of those have subsided. We will know more as the legislature wraps up and we'll keep you posted.

Prison Reform – You may remember that the Legislature could not reach an agreement on this issue in July but did score the savings anticipated from any deal reached. When they returned in August, they attempted to pass a measure, but it died in the Assembly after passing the Senate. The Assembly has since put together their own package, which did pass and now is sitting on the Senate floor; it is unclear if the Senate plans to take up the measure at this time. One of the biggest sticking points is on the early release of 30,000 non-violent offenders, given the recent news around the Antioch woman who was kidnapped and held captive for 18 years, by a sexually violent offender, it has made it more difficult to obtain the necessary votes for this proposal.

Water Bonds

The Legislature is attempting to put together a water deal during these last two weeks of session. There is a water conference committee that has been called which plans to meet through the Labor Day Weekend and hopes to wrap up with a comprehensive agreement by the end of session. We remain skeptical at this point but will continue to follow it and report on the outcomes.

Legislative Platform

We wanted to update you on the County's two sponsored bills. The first measure is AB 359 by Assembly Member Nava, which will allow women in the Medi-Cal system to receive a digital mammogram in place of an analogue mammogram, which is currently covered under the Medi-Cal system. The bill came off of the Senate suspense file on August 27 and is now sitting on the Senate Floor. The California Department of Public Health has requested some specific amendments, which were introduced on Thursday, September 3, 2009. The bill should be in print by September 7 and is expected to be re-referred to the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee. We worked closely with the committee to ensure the bill will not get stuck in their committee. They anticipate hearing the bill "off of the floor" during the last week of session. We will update you at the Legislative committee meeting on September 14, 2009.

SB 619 by Senator Strickland and Assembly Member Pedro Nava is on its way to the Governor's office. The bill passed the Assembly floor with unanimous, bi-partisan support. The Governor will have until October 11, 2009 to act on the measure; we will keep you posted on the outcome.

We also continue to work on AB 50 by Assembly Member Nava. This measure will allow the county to receive the proper reimbursements from the Tea Fire as well as the Jesusita Fire. We are working with the Governor's office and they have asked that we remove the Zaca fire, based on the tax year, due to the expenses of the fires in San Diego; therefore we amended that tax year out of the bill in hopes of obtaining his signature on

the measure. The bill is sitting on the Senate floor waiting to be heard, and then it will return to the Assembly for concurrence and off to the Governor for signature.

There is one other measure that the County is interested in, AB 566 by Assembly Member Pedro Nava. This measure relates to mobile home park issues and the right of the residents to own the park (i.e. park conversions). AB 566 is currently sitting on the Senate floor awaiting a hearing, if it is successful, it will return to the Assembly for concurrence and then go to the Governor. We will continue to update you on this measure as well.

Another issue that has been on our radar screen is AB 494 by Assembly Member Anna Caballero, the county is opposed to this bill because it takes away local authority as it relates to housing permits on Williamson Act land for farm worker housing. This measure attempts to further the intent of a 1999 bill by now Senator Denise Ducheny. Essentially, the bill will allow those who want to build more farm worker housing by exempting leases from the Map Act and prohibiting local officials from denying use permits. The measure has been amended, others such as CSAC and the Farm bureau have removed their opposition, and we are reviewing it now and hope to make a decision on our position based on the current round of amendments soon. While we have yet to make a determination, we wanted to let you know that the bill has moved off of the Assembly floor and is sitting on the Governor's desk awaiting his signature.

We also wanted to update you on a measure that has been recently introduced, AB 1422 by Speaker Karen Bass and Senator Darrel Steinberg. This measure is a negotiated deal with the Counties, Health Plans and the State of California that will allow an extension of a tax to be assessed to all Medi-cal managed health care plans that will go into the Healthy Families account to continue to provide health care coverage for 500,000 that would have otherwise been disenrolled as of October 1, 2009 due to the budget cuts. The measure moved very quickly, in two days, it went through the Senate, two policy committee hearing in the Assembly, one fiscal and to the floor; it now sits on the Governor's desk awaiting his signature.

Wrap-Up

As we end this year in the next week, there will be many new and exciting things to report on during the last week of session. We will continue to keep the Board updated on any and all activities that pertain to our legislative platform and the budget clean-up items of interest to the county. Keep in mind, we adjourn on September 11, 2009, but are expected to return for two special sessions, one on education and drawing down federal dollars, the second on the proposed tax commission. We will continue to monitor those sessions and update you on any pertinent issues to the county. We also expect the Governor to move slowly in signing and vetoing the bills; he is expecting bills in the thousands and has until October 11, 2009 to sign or veto legislation.