

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 3, 2009

FY 2010 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Congress returns from its August recess after Labor Day, and the House and the Senate are expected to continue their efforts to move the various FY 2010 funding bills through floor proceedings, with the goal of completing joint negotiations on the measures before the new fiscal year begins on October 1. Of particular interest to the County is the *FY 2010 Energy and Water Development Appropriations* bill. As reported in our August Update, the House version of the bill includes \$500,000 for the County's Goleta Beach Park Coastal Access and Recreation Enhancement project, as requested by Congresswoman Capps. The Senate bill would provide \$250,000 for the Lower Mission Creek Flood Control Project as requested by both Senators Boxer and Feinstein, and also contains report language directing the Army Corps of Engineers to support the Goleta Beach project through the Section 103 Shoreline Protection Program. Since the House and Senate both approved their versions of the Energy and Water bill before the recess, it will likely be one of the earlier bills to go to a joint conference committee for final negotiations. While the House has approved all twelve FY 2010 spending measures, the Senate has not completed floor consideration of six of the bills, including Commerce, Justice, & Science, Interior, Labor & Health and Human Services, and Transportation/HUD. If the conference agreements on any of these bills are not finalized by October 1, it will be necessary for Congress to pass short-term Continuing Resolutions to keep the respective Federal agencies funded and operational until the appropriations bills are completed and signed into law by President

HEALTH CARE REFORM

In addition to completion of the FY 2010 appropriations process, Congress will be continuing to focus much of its attention this autumn on efforts to reform the Nation's health care system. As has been highly pub-

licized, President Obama will address a rare joint session of Congress on the issue on September 9, with the intent of restoring focus to a debate that has become chaotic over the last few months. We are continuing to closely monitor Congressional action on health care reform, and are coordinating with NACo and other local government advocacy groups to determine potential impacts on the County both as a provider and an employer. In the House, committee action on H.R. 3200, the *America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009*, has been completed, and the intent is to bring it to the floor for full House debate in September. In the Senate, the Committees on Finance and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) must still reconcile their respective draft versions of the bill, and Finance Committee Chairman Baucus continues to work with a small group of Democratic and Republican centrists in an attempt to craft a bipartisan approach. At this point, none of these efforts are set in stone, and President Obama's address and direction may be pivotal.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY BLOCK GRANTS

The County has been working with a consortium of other California counties that have been adversely impacted by the formula that the Department of Energy (DOE) utilized to distribute funding included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). Because of DOE's interpretation of the original statute authorizing EECBG, the County was not given a direct allocation under the program despite having a population above the 200,000 threshold. Chairman Centeno recently joined the Chairs of other impacted counties in joint letters to members of Congress on this issue, and we are following up on that effort with our local Congressional delegation.

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