

Memorandum

TO: Members, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

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

RE: March 2009 Update

DATE: March 17, 2009

BUDGET

When we last reported to you, the state had yet to adopt a budget to allow California to start to dig its way out of our \$41.6 Billion deficit. On February 14, 2009 the Legislature went into session and did not adjourn until February 19th at 7:30 am. Legislators were only allowed to leave to go to their offices to sleep for a few hours at a time. After five days of debate, a deal was finally reached, thanks to Senator Abel Maldonado (R – Santa Maria). He had many demands in order to get his vote, including an open primary beginning in 2012, legislators forgoing their per diem when there is a budget impasse and \$600 million in unallocated reductions. With those agreements met, he put up the final vote to get the budget to the Governor. Although this budget is slated to be an 18-month budget, the reality is that the April receipts are already projected to be lower than expected, allowing the May Revise as an opportunity to reopen discussions. In terms of hits to the County, many are still unknown due to the implementation of the Federal Stimulus Bill that is expected and the anticipation of how those dollars will be spent. Some areas of particular concern are in health and human services. The Legislature cut back its portion of the IHSS wages to \$9.50 per hour and \$.60 for benefits, so if the County is in a contract at the higher level, they are now on the hook for the additional funds. We were also disappointed with the Proposition 10/First 5 decision. The Legislature opted to take a large percent of those funds from locals and the entire state piece in an effort to balance the budget. Other areas of interest to the county are related to transportation dollars, as it remains unclear how the stimulus will allocate those dollars to locals in order to keep the 1B funds moving into local projects. We are continuing to participate in the working groups in an effort to see how much the county can anticipate receiving and will continue to work through your staff in an effort to keeping you updated.

Legislative Platform

On February 27, 2009 we had our bill introduction deadline, prior to that Friday there had been about 600 bills introduced, another 1500 or so were introduced on the last two days. There are several bills that may be of interest to the County. We are currently reviewing them with staff to get them in shape to bring to the Legislative Committee for review and possibly take a position on them. Additionally, we are working with our delegation to see what they introduced that might be of interest to the County so we can move forward

and help our members out as well. We also introduced two County sponsored bills, 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 current covered under the Medi-Cal system. We worked closely with your public health department, and Supervisor Wolf, in an effort to get this bill introduced and are continuing to work with stakeholders at the state level to ensure the bill's success.

We also introduced SB 326 by Senator Tony Strickland, with relates to the housing crisis in Santa Barbara County. The bill is an effort to work with HCD on the foreclosure issue and to find a way to allow some flexibility in the housing element process. We are continuing to work on the language to meet the needs of the County and will continue to keep you updated as those conversations move forward.

Another bill introduced was AB 486 by Assembly Member Wes Chesbro (D-Napa). This measure is an attempt to take care of the issue that many counties face when they are in a state of emergency and the amount of times that they have to continue to meet and adopt resolutions. Under current law the time frame is every 14 days. We would like to move it to every 30 days, and AB 486 takes care of this issue. There are many bills that we will continue to review with your staff and make recommendations to you as we work through the bill load.

Wrap-Up

As we wrap-up the March report, we hope to continue to work on our legislative package as well as other bills of interest to the County. We have worked with Senator Strickland's office to get him out to one of our Proposition 10/First 5 sites so he can see how the program is making a difference in his community. We hope to have other members of our delegation join him as well as members of the Board, and anticipate that it will be a great tour. Additionally, we are continuing to meet on the state budget and the stimulus package, and we will continue to keep you updated on this issue along with the others that are mentioned in this report as the year unfolds. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional details on any or all of these matters at this time.