

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 30, 2012

TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

Aides to members of the joint Senate-House Conference Committee on legislation to reauthorize highway and surface transportation programs are continuing to hold a series of working group meetings with the target of having negotiations completed and a final bill to President Obama by the end of June. While details of the progress are being closely embargoed, Senator Boxer, who as Chair of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is one of the lead Senate negotiators, has indicated that there are no sticking points that are creating insurmountable hurdles for conferees, and that the Senate-passed S. 1813, the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act*, will comprise most of the final conference agreement. She also indicated that, while a resolution to one of most contentious issues – how to pay for the bill – has not yet been achieved, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus (D-MT) and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman (R-MI) have found what she calls a “very sweet spot” to finance the gap between costs and gas tax revenues that will be acceptable to Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate. While she was not more specific, Senator Boxer remains opposed to revenue provisions in the House bill that would increase drilling in California coastal waters.

FY 2013 BUDGET PROCESS

With the approach of the Memorial Day recess, the pace of work on FY 2013 appropriations bill has slowed considerably. As the beginning of May, the House had held mark-ups of the *Commerce, Justice and Science* and *Energy and Water* bills, and the Senate had marked up the *Agriculture, Commerce, Justice and Science, Energy and Water, and Transportation/HUD*. In the ensuing weeks, the *FY 2013 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill has been drafted in both chambers, but so far the only bill to be approved by the full House has been the *Commerce, Justice*

and *Science* spending measure, and no appropriations bill has reached the Senate floor. The difference in the spending caps being utilized by the House and Senate continues to be an issue. Senate Democrats and the Obama Administration in particular are concerned that if they pass already-drafted bills now, it will make it more difficult to take action on the larger, more controversial bills like the *Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations* measure later on, as funding under the caps will have already been committed. This concern suggests that they may be holding out for an omnibus spending package that would consider all funding under the cap simultaneously instead of piecemeal.

FLOOD INSURANCE

We urged Chairman Johnson (D-SD) and Ranking Minority Member Shelby (R-AL) of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee to expedite action on the Chairman’s S. 1940, the *Flood Insurance Reform and Modernization Act*, which would reauthorize and reform the National Flood Insurance Program. The House approved its version of the legislation last year as H.R. 1309, and included provisions to suspend mandatory purchase requirements in flood protection systems under improvement and to reform coverage terms and premium rates. While the Senate bill is considered non-controversial and has been crafted to align with the House version, it has not yet been scheduled for full Senate consideration. Since the program is scheduled to expire on May 31, the House approved H.R. 5740 to extend existing authority for another month. The bill was subsequently approved by the Senate before it recess for Memorial Day.

CHILD SUPPORT

We joined NACo in continuing to advocate for legislation that would restore the ability of State and local governments to use child support incentive payments as matching

funds to enhance collection-related activities. The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 eliminated the Federal match that was paid when these incentive payments were reinvested into child support enforcement programs. Most recently, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included a temporary restoration of this authority that expired in September, 2010. In the Senate, we contacted the Senate Finance Committee to advocate in support of Senator Rockefeller's (D-WV) S. 195, the *Child Support Protection Act*, which would Although companion legislation has not yet been introduced in the House, we urged Ways and Means Committee Chairman Camp (R-MI) and Ranking Minority Member Levin (D-MI) to take action on the issue, and asked our local Congressional delegation to support rescission of the DRA child support provisions.

PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING

When the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) announced its funding under the FY 2012 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program, we provided the application package to the County for action. The funding can be used for a variety of public FY 2012 activities, and under the allocation for JAG, Santa Barbara County is eligible for \$104,599 in conjunction with the Cities of Santa Maria and Santa Barbara. The joint application was due by May 14.

v Tom Walters v