

# Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

APRIL 7, 2014

## **FY 2015 FEDERAL FUNDING**

The respective House and Senate Appropriations Committees are holding hearings in full earnest in anticipation of drafting the twelve FY 2015 Appropriations bills, and we have contacted each of the subcommittees of relevance to County funding streams to reiterate support for specific programs. These include programs impacting the County's public health, public safety, social services, public works, community development, and environmental-related responsibilities. We are also working with NACo and CSAC to address specific areas of concern. For example, after NACo issued an Action Alert regarding a bipartisan "Dear Colleague" letter to be sent to the House Transportation/HUD Appropriations Subcommittee regarding funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), we urged members of the local Delegation to join in the effort. We are working with CSAC to garner increased support for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) amongst the California delegation. The President's FY 2015 budget request did not include SCAAP.

## **DROUGHT RELIEF**

Several bills related to California drought relief are beginning to work their way through the legislative process, including Senator Feinstein's S. 2016, the *California Emergency Drought Relief Act of 2014*. We provided these measures to County staff for analysis, and highlighted provisions that may provide assistance to the County, particularly in relation to ongoing discussions with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation regarding emergency operating assistance at Lake Cachuma. We contacted the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in support of Senator Feinstein's efforts, and they informed us that the bill is likely to receive expedited floor consideration in the near future. Companion legislation has been introduced in the House by Congressman Costa (D-CA) as H.R. 4039.

## **WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

We contacted House and Senate conferees on Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization legislation to advocate the County's priorities as they negotiate a final conference agreement on their respective bills. Last year, the House approved H.R. 3080, the *Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA)*, while the Senate passed its version as S. 601, the *Water Resources Development Act*. There are significant differences between the two bills, including the mechanisms to be implemented to enable the Corps to authorize project itself. In particular, we advocated against provisions that could lead to the de-authorization of projects such as Lower Mission Creek that have not yet received construction funding from the Federal government, arguing that the focus should be on a project's merits rather than lack of funding. We supported provisions that would direct that the Corps' vegetation management policy be reviewed and revised to take into account regional characteristics and habitat for species of concern, and that would establish a Public-Private Partnership Pilot Program and increase opportunities for non-Federal interests to support or expedite projects. Negotiations are proceeding slowly.

## **MAP 21 REAUTHORIZATION**

As follow-up to Supervisor Carbajal's meetings during his Washington, DC lobbying trip, we contacted the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to reiterate the County's support for a multi-year reauthorization of surface transportation legislation. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) was an anomaly in that it was only a two year reauthorization, and is set to expire this year. We emphasized support for inclusion of a fully-funded Highway Bridge Program that addresses all three categories of bridges – National Highway System, on-system, and off-system. We also advocated increased funding for pavement preservation and resources to maintain existing infrastruc-

ture, arguing that County roads are deteriorating faster than they can be repaired. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee staff have indicated they are on track to begin drafting a bill later this spring, while the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee – which is chaired by Senator Boxer – is targeting mid-summer for action on its MAP-21 reauthorization legislation.

#### **FEDERAL CHILD CARE FUNDING**

We advocated in support of full Senate action on Senator Mikulski's S. 1086, the *Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act*, emphasizing the critical importance of adequate funding for child care to the County's ability to help low income families transition to self-sufficiency. CCDBG has not been reauthorized in 17 years, and the Senate HELP Committee had approved S. 1086 last September. On March 13, the Senate overwhelmingly approved the measure on a vote of 96-2, with Senators Boxer and Feinstein both supporting the bill.

#### **CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

We contacted members of the House Judiciary Committee to advocate in support of Congresswoman Bass' (D-CA) H.R. 3923, which would expand the authority of social service agencies with child protection responsibilities to access the national crime information databases. Currently, child welfare agencies such as the County's Department of Social Services cannot access national crime information databases for use in their background checks for foster care placements, and we argued H.R. 3923 would help enable them to perform accurate and timely assessments of potential placements for foster children. The bill has bipartisan support, and we have asked Congresswoman Capps to also cosponsor the proposal. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on H.R. 3923.

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