

TO: Members, County of Santa Barbara Legislative Committee

FROM: Cliff Berg, Legislative Advocate
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RE: April 2014 State Update

DATE: April 30, 2014

As we wrap up April, we are also staring at a policy deadline in the first house of May 2, 2014. Once this deadline passes many bills will not continue to move through the process, given that it is the second year of the two year session, they will die. Many of the bills that have passed policy are sitting on the Appropriations Committee suspense file which will be taken up on May 23, 2014.

Speaker-Elect, Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) will be sworn-in on May 12, 2014 and will then begin to determine which committee changes will be made, what the budget priorities for her caucus will be and where staff will go. Speaker-Elect Atkins has said that she is committed to her caucus' blue print that they released in December, which is helpful in terms of where the Assembly will be on the various budget priorities.

Senator Steinberg has yet to announce when Senator DeLeon will take over, but we have heard it will be at the end of Senator Steinberg's term. We understand that Senator DeLeon is part of every leadership discussion which will help guide him once he is officially sworn-in.

BUDGET

With May coming, we look forward to the release of the May Revise on May 15, 2014. This is the time that the Governor can "readjust" his budget based on what the April receipts looked like. The budget sub-committees will be able to close out many of their open items that have been left open until after the May Revise and those that either house disagrees on will then go to the budget conference committee. Conference Committee is scheduled to begin in late May/Early June.

Any outstanding issues that cannot be resolved by the budget conference committee will go to the "Big Five", which will consist of the Governor and the leaders from each party in each house. We suspect that given the budget surplus that there will be some issues that will be difficult to resolve as each house has their various priorities as does the Governor. Given that we finally have a health budget and a hefty surplus there are many requests for restoration of programs as well as the creation of some new programs, such as Transitional Kindergarten becoming mandatory, just as an example.

We will continue to watch the various sub-committees and work with staff on issues that are important to the Counties platform.

WATER

There are now a total of 12 water bonds “floating around” including the one that is currently on the November ballot. The legislature is continuing to move many of the bonds along as the discussions continue, once we get closer to the June 26, 2014 deadline for the November ballot, we will be seeing which proposal rises to the top. Given the recent drought and the severity of it, the November 2014 bond proposal is now polling at 59%, 60% is where most would be more comfortable, but 59% is much better than it has polled in the past.

In terms of an update on Lake Cachuma, we are continuing to work closely with the Governor’s staff and our delegation. Our delegation was briefed on Monday by the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Finance, and the Department of Public Health. We understand that we are not eligible for the current emergency drought legislation. However, we are continuing to talk with the Governor’s office to see if we can find a path to allow for funding through another channel. We will continue to work with them and your staff on finding a workable solution.

Bills of Interest to the County

AB 919 (Williams) This bill was a two year bill, but successfully moved to the second house in January. It will be heard in the Senate Governance and Finance Committee later this spring or early summer. The bill Enables a "qualified veteran" to receive from the state a "qualified repayment" of state and local sales taxes paid to the State Board of Equalization (BOE) during the eight-year period beginning on and after April 1, 2002, and before April 1, 2010. The bill is sponsored by the State Board of Equalization and has had unanimous support to date. The bill is supported by the County.

AB 1799 (Gordon) This bill was introduced to allow for greater use of tax payer dollars. As of late, the Department of Fish and Wildlife have moved to a very aggressive form of endowments for mitigation, therefore locking up precious resources in perpetuity. Local governments are charged with careful use of tax payer dollars and as such many believe it is an inappropriate use of those dollars to lock them up so DFW can utilize the interest earned to take care of any potential mitigation issues. The bill is not intended to have public agencies get out of covering mitigation costs, simply to use those dollars more appropriately. There are many safe guards in the bill to ensure that they are still responsible for those projects in perpetuity. The bill was referred to Assembly Local Government Committee where it passed unanimously. The bill was heard in Assembly Water Parks and Wildlife Committee on April 29, 2014 where it received unanimous support as well. There is some opposition, which we are continuing to work with to try and find a solution. The bill is sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Water District and is supported by the County.

AB 1970 (Gordon) This bill proposes to create the Community Investment and Innovation Program which will provide funding to local governments in the form of grants and other financial assistance to develop and implement greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction projects. The bill is supported by the County and will be heard in Assembly Appropriations Committee in May. The bill has bi-partisan support to date.

AB 2026 (Stone) This bill allows for safeguards to individual mobile home owners by decreasing their reliance on mobile home park management when attempting to sell their mobile home. The bill is supported by the County and passed out of Assembly Housing Committee on April 30, 2014.

AB 2373 (Hernandez) This bill requires every county to provide its probation officer with the resources the probation officer needs to properly discharge his or her responsibilities or provide notification that it does not have the resources available to do so. The bill is opposed by the County, it has taken some amendments as of late, we are still reviewing them to determine if we will remain opposed. The bill will be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee in May.

AB 2455 (Williams) This bill changes the Community Services District Law that specifies that those boards must have 5 board members, AB 2455 would allow this special district to drop down to 3 board members until January of 2035. This will allow the District to conduct its regularly scheduled business which they are unable to do at this time. The bill is supported by the County and will be heard on the Assembly Floor on May 1, 2014.

SB 270 (Padilla) This bill is the compromise bill prohibiting stores from allowing single-use carry-out bags. This bill would require stores that have gross sales at a specific price point to allow customers to purchase bags, but they will not have them available for free. As mentioned, this is the compromise bill between government and industry as well as the “mom and pop” stores. The bill is currently awaiting a committee assignment, but it is in the Assembly so we anticipate it will not be heard until late spring or early summer. We will keep you updated on its progress.

SB 498 (Lara) This bill is a reintroduction of SB 801 that the county supported last year. Unfortunately, due to last minute amendments the Governor vetoed SB 801. The Senator met with stakeholders over the fall and this is the compromise bill. The bill is sitting in the Assembly and has been referred to Assembly Natural Resources Committee and the Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxics Materials. SB 498 will help to facilitate the development of cleaner and more efficient technologies in California for converting biomass materials into renewable energy by expanding the definition of biomass to include non-combustion conversion technology. The County is supporting the bill.

SB 929 (Jackson) This bill establishes the Distinguished after School Health (DASH) Recognition Program within the Department of Public Health in consultation with the Department of Education, as appropriate. It allows after-school programs to apply for DASH certification by self-certifying to meeting the requirements of the program. It also requires DASH-certified programs to recertify every year. Additionally, it requires DPH to maintain and update a list of DASH-certified programs on its Internet Web site. The bill is supported by the County and passed out of Senate Education on April 30, 2014.

SB 1451 (Hill) This bill would require the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, on or before January 1, 2016, and on or before January 1 of each year thereafter, to submit to the Legislature a report on the types and effectiveness of a representative sample of mitigation measures adopted by state and local agencies. This bill will be heard in Senate Environmental Safety on April 30, 2014.

Conclusion

With the release of the May revise upon us and the policy deadline approaching, we will have a busy May. Once we have a chance to review the May Revise and its potential impact on the County, we will work with your staff to brief you. We anticipate that this will be a busy summer and will continue to keep you updated as issues arise. As always, if you or your staff has any questions, please let us know.