

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 5, 2017

FY 2018 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Federal Fiscal Year 2018 begins on October 1, and so far none of the 12 appropriations bills to fund the Federal government have been enacted. In addition to the limited number of legislative days in September, several issues are complicating the process. President Trump has sent Congress an emergency request for \$14.55 billion to fund Hurricane Harvey response and recovery, including an immediate appropriation of \$7.85 billion. The debt limit ceiling is rapidly approaching and must be raised to prevent default on the Government's financial obligations. There are also various other points of contention between the parties over program funding levels and legislative riders that need to be resolved. It is likely that Congressional leaders will attempt to package several of the bills together for consideration at the same time, which can allow them to expedite floor action and limit debate and amendments. House Speaker Ryan (R-WI) has indicated that interim funding through a short-term Continuing Resolution may be necessary in order to provide additional time for Congress to complete the bills.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Working in concert with NACo, we contacted the Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to urge them to take action on legislation to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program. Both programs are set to expire on September 30. CHIP currently provides 11,000 children in Santa Barbara County with comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage for a modest monthly premium and co-pays, and MIECHV supports the California Home Visiting Program, providing voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services to at-risk pregnant women and parents with young children. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Hatch (R-UT), who crafted the original CHIP program has scheduled hearings to develop bipartisan

legislation to reauthorize the programs, beginning on September 7.

IMMIGRATION REFORM - DREAMERS

After Attorney General Sessions announced that the Administration was phasing out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, we immediately contacted the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to reiterate the County's support for legislation to continue the program, citing the hundreds of undocumented students that graduate from Santa Barbara County high schools every year. In the House, Congressman Coffman (R-CO) has introduced bipartisan legislation to continue DACA as H.R. 496, the *Bar Removal of Individuals Who Dream and Grow our Economy Act* or *BRIDGE Act*, and companion legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Graham (R-SC) as S. 128. Congressman Carbajal is a cosponsor to H.R. 496, and both Senator Feinstein and Senator Harris are cosponsors of S. 128. There is broad bipartisan support for continuation of DACA, and Leadership in both the House and Senate have signaled an interest in moving forward on legislation to make the program permanent.

CHANNEL ISLANDS MARINE SANCTUARY

We contacted Commerce Department Secretary Ross and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) officials on behalf of the County to oppose any action to reduce the boundaries of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary as the result of a review of sanctuary boundaries mandated by an Executive Order from President Trump. We also urged Congressman Carbajal and Senators Feinstein and Harris to weigh in on the issue. Congressman Carbajal led an effort that included nineteen of his colleagues, contacting Secretary Ross in support of maintaining the existing boundaries of Channel Islands and three other marine preserves. The comment period on the agency's review ended in August and its findings are pending.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Earlier this summer members of the House Ways and Means Committee introduced a package of bipartisan bills intended to strengthen the child welfare system. These included:

- H.R. 2742, the *Modernizing the Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act*;
- H.R. 2847, the *Improving Services for Older Youth in Foster Care Act*;
- H.R. 2857, the *Supporting Families in Substance Abuse Treatment Act*, and,
- H.R. 2866, the *Reducing Barriers for Relative Foster Parents Act*.

With strong bipartisan support, all four bills were taken directly to the House floor and overwhelmingly approved. They have now been referred to the Senate for consideration.

SECOND CHANCE ACT

In July, Congressman Sensenbrenner (R-WI) introduced H.R. 2899, the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2017*. We contacted the Judiciary Committee to reiterate the County's support for the Second Chance Act, and also urged the Senate Judiciary Committee to take action on the issue. The previous authorization expired on September 30, 2010, and while Congress has continued to fund the Act's programs through the annual appropriations process, we argued the importance of reauthorizing and improving Second Chance to ensure the availability of much needed re-entry resources to local governments. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on H.R. 2899.

ADULT SERVICES

We continued to advocate the County's support for Federal resources to enable it to respond effectively to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults, as well as to enhance elder abuse prosecution and prevention programs. Earlier in the year, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved Chairman Grassley's S. 178, the *Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act* as S.178, which would address elder abuse and exploitation, and improve the justice system's response to victims in elder abuse and exploitation cases. The measure has bipartisan support, including Senator Feinstein, who is the Ranking Minority Member of the Judiciary Committee. On August 1, S. 178 was approved by the full Senate and sent to the House, where it has been referred jointly to the Judiciary and Energy and Commerce Committees. We have asked them to expedite consideration of the measure.

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