

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 25, 2018

FALL SCHEDULE

Despite an aggressive schedule so far in September, Congress is running out of time to complete action on numerous initiatives that are at various stages of the legislative process. Dozens of minor bills are being brought to the House floor this week under expedited “suspension of the rules” procedures. In addition, the House will vote this week on H.R. 302, which would reauthorize aviation programs for five years, but is also being used as a legislative vehicle for other unrelated issues, including: \$1.7 billion for aid to areas affected by Hurricane Florence, an overhaul of Federal Emergency Management Administration payouts, a reauthorization of the National Transportation Safety Board, and the first-ever authorization of the Transportation Security Administration. The crowded floor schedule indicates that House leaders are aiming to adjourn as early as possible in October – possibly as early as next week - to send members of Congress home to campaign.

FEDERAL BUDGET

House and Senate leaders are also racing to enact as many of the twelve individual appropriations bills as possible before the October 1 start of the new Federal fiscal year. In addition to the three-bill “minibus” that was enacted on September 21, a conference agreement has been reached on a final version of a funding package that includes the Defense Department and Labor-HHS-Education bills. The Senate adopted that conference report on September 18 and the House is scheduling a vote on the package for later this week.

Although the pace of appropriations work is the most productive in over ten years, most of the funding bills will have to wait until the post-election *Lame Duck* Session for enactment. A four-bill package consisting of the Interior-Environment, Financial Services, Transportation-HUD, and Agriculture bills is still in conference

committee, but lawmakers are running out of time to settle disagreements between the House and Senate versions. And the Homeland Security, Commerce-Justice-Science, and State Department bills have yet to see floor time in either chamber. A Continuing Resolution to provide interim funding through December 7 is in the works to allow Congress time to complete the bills after the election.

OPIOID CRISIS

The Senate passed its version of H.R. 6, the *Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act*, on September 17. The legislation includes dozens of provisions to address the opioids crisis, including language to enable development of non-addictive painkillers, authorize grants for evidence-based substance abuse prevention and treatment services, and reauthorize the Office of National Drug Control Policy. A somewhat broader version of H.R. 6 passed the House on June 22. A conference committee to negotiate a final version of the legislation is close to completing its work and a vote in the House on their agreement could be scheduled for this week.

FARM BILL/NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Negotiations on a final 2018 Farm Bill are continuing as the September 30 deadline for reauthorizing agriculture, conservation and nutrition programs approaches. Differences between the House and Senate versions of H.R. 2, the *Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018*, particularly over the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, remain unresolved, as do some issues around farm programs. Committee leaders are signaling that they do not plan to enact a short-term extension for Farm Bill programs because they want to keep the pressure on to negotiate a compromise final version of the legislation.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

On September 13, the House passed legislation to reauthorize Army Corps of Engineers programs and policies by amending an unrelated Senate bill, S. 3021, with compromise language that was negotiated by House and Senate committee leaders. This move is an attempt to expedite Senate consideration of Water Resources Development Act of 2018 legislation without waiting for an actual conference committee to negotiate a final version of the legislation. The legislation adopted by the House takes a bipartisan and relatively narrow approach to authorizing Army Corps programs and projects. It would de-authorize older USACE projects that have not been funded, but these provisions are not expected to impact County projects.

HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

Earlier today, the House passed H.R. 6378, the *Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2018*, to reauthorize programs to respond to infectious disease outbreaks and other medical emergencies. The legislation would extend funding authorizations, with increases, for these programs through 2023 including programs through the CDC to help states prepare for health emergencies, preparedness grants for hospitals, and programs to help develop treatments and vaccines for health emergencies.