

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 28, 2019

APPROPRIATIONS

The House Appropriations Committee approved the *FY 2020 Energy and Water Appropriations Act* on May 21, which provides funding for the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Energy and several other agencies. The *Energy and Water Appropriations Act*, as approved by the Committee, would provide a total of \$7.36 billion for navigation, flood control, ecosystem restoration and other projects at the Army Corps of Engineers. This is a five percent increase compared to last year and a 52 percent increase above the President's Budget Request.

Although the House is moving ahead with funding legislation, a bipartisan agreement has still not been reached on overall spending limits. The current budget spending caps were temporarily increased for FY 2018 and FY 2019, but will revert back this year, which would result in across-the-board spending cuts of approximately ten percent of discretionary spending. Although the House has been able to start drafting its versions of the funding bills, the spending caps must be increased through budget enforcement legislation, which would require the support of the Senate and the White House. Otherwise, any FY 2020 appropriations would be subject to across-the-board cuts through sequestration to enforce the limitation.

PROTECT PATRIOT PARENTS

We contacted the House Judiciary Committee in support of Representative Carbajal's H.R. 1871, the *Protect Patriot Parents Act*, and thanked the Congressman for his leadership on this issue. H.R. 1871 would protect military families who are facing deportation by allowing for adjustment to immigration status for parents of those who are serving or have served in the United States Armed Forces. We urged

the Committee to consider the sacrifice and investment in our nation by those who serve and enact H.R. 1871, as well as comprehensive immigration reform.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Last week, the House Judiciary Committee voted to approve several immigration bills, including Representative Roybal-Allard's (D-CA) H.R. 2820, the *Dream Act of 2019*. H.R. 2820 would create a permanent resident status on a conditional basis for long-term residents who entered the United States as children. This would create a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and protect them from deportation, allow them to work legally in the U.S. and permit them to travel outside the country. The bill is a priority for House Democrats and will be brought to the floor for a vote in June.

In the Senate, Judiciary Committee Chair Graham (R-SC) has introduced S. 1494, the *Secure and Protect Act of 2019*, to address increased numbers of asylum seekers at the US border. The legislation would require that asylum applications from residents of certain Central American countries or Mexico be filed at refugee processing centers that are outside the United States. It would modify US laws to allow families to be held together up to 100 days in the United States while making their asylum claims, up from the current 20-day limit. S. 1494 would double the number of immigration judges and allow the United States to return all unaccompanied minors to their country of origin after screening. In advance of the bill's introduction, Chair Graham indicated that he hopes that the bill could be a vehicle for a bipartisan agreement on immigration reform. It is likely that when the bill is scheduled for a mark-up, the Judiciary Committee will debate adding protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients to the legislation.

SPACE COMMAND

We contacted Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson to urge her to designate Vandenberg Air Force Base as U.S. Space Command Headquarters. We coordinated our efforts with Representative Carbajal, who recently joined with Senator Feinstein and Senator Harris to also contact Secretary Wilson. On May 14, the Air Force released its six candidates for the newly-reconstituted U.S. Space Command as a functional Unified Combatant Command. The six bases that are under consideration are: Vandenberg Air Force Base, Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Air Force Base, Buckley Air Force Base, and Redstone Arsenal.

DISASTER AID

Just before adjourning for the Memorial Day recess, Senate negotiators reached agreement on a bipartisan package of disaster aid that will provide \$19.1 billion in relief for states and territories recently impacted by tornadoes, flooding, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, volcanoes, and typhoons, including wildfires in California. The package was adopted by the Senate on May 23. However, when the House attempted to pass it by unanimous consent the next day, an objection was offered by a junior member of the Republican party, which halted further proceedings on the bill. Subsequent efforts to pass the bill have also been objected to, despite the support for the measure by Republican appropriators and President Trump. Eventually the House will be able to clear the bill for the President's signature, but the current parliamentary maneuvering is successfully delaying the bill while the House is in recess for the week.

FLOOD INSURANCE

An extension for the National Flood Insurance Program through September 30 was included as a provision in the disaster aid bill that is pending a final vote in the House. The current NFIP authorization will expire on May 31 and Congress has enacted several short-term extensions in recent years to keep the program operational. The NFIP has paid out more in

claims than it has collected in premiums in recent years and the program is currently about \$20 billion in debt. The House Committee on Financial Services held a hearing in March to examine these issues and possible ways forward for NFIP reauthorization legislation.

HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

We contacted the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in support of S. 923, the *Fighting Homelessness Through Services and Housing Act*. We also thanked Senator Feinstein for sponsoring the legislation and Senator Harris for cosponsoring the bill, which would authorize \$750 million annually for five years to fund supportive housing models that provide comprehensive services and intensive case management. The legislation would condition federal funds on a grant recipient's ability to provide not only housing but also services like mental health care, substance abuse treatment and job training.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

HUD has announced FY 2019 funding awards for several housing and community development programs that we advocate for in coordination with NACo and other housing stakeholders. Santa Barbara County was allocated \$1.2 million in Community Development Block Grant funding, and \$1.17 million under the HOME Program. Both allocations represent slight increases over the FY 2018 level.

*Don Gilchrest
Thomas Walters & Associates, Inc.*