

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 9, 2008

FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS

Congress reconvened on September 8, following its August recess and the Democratic and Republican Presidential conventions. During the break, we continued to work with our local Congressional delegation in support of the County's funding priorities through the FY 2009 appropriations process, including both programmatic and project-related proposals. However, it appears more and more likely that Congress will complete few if any of the appropriations bills before FY 2009 begins on October 1, meaning they will have to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep Federal agencies open and funded at current year levels. House and Senate Congressional Leadership continue to indicate that Congress will also adjourn for the year at the end of the month. If this holds true, and there is not a Lamé Duck session after the November elections, then the most likely scenario is that the CR will extend into the early months of 2009, and that the new Congress will then complete the FY 2009 appropriations process in concert with the new Administration.

HOUSING/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Following passage of H.R. 3221, the *Foreclosure Prevention Act*, just before the August recess, we began participation in a working group with other stakeholders regarding the implementation of provisions to distribute \$4 billion to urban cities and counties to purchase and redevelop foreclosed homes under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. We joined other members of the working group in meeting with HUD officials regarding implementation issues, and worked with the group to draft a follow-up letter to the agency emphasizing common areas of agreement on how the program would best work. The letter was sent on August 20. HUD is targeting the end of September for the issuance of guidance on the program.

We continued to advocate for housing and community development programs of significance to the County. The *FY 2009 Transportation, HUD Appropriations* bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee before the August recess rejects the Administration's proposal to eliminate HOPE VI, proposing \$100 million for the program. The bill would increase CDBG by \$23 million over the FY 2008 level to \$3.88 billion, and would provide \$1.966 billion for HOME Investment Partnerships, \$1.667 billion for homeless assistance grants, \$765 million in elderly housing, and \$315.1 million for HOPWA.

GAP FIRE AFTERMATH

After Supervisor Carbajal and other County officials met with Federal officials in response to the Gap Fire, we worked in support of the County's efforts with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and FEMA for close cooperation in the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team process. We discussed the BAER team process with Congresswoman Capps' staff, and the Congresswoman included this topic in her meetings with the Los Padres National Forest Supervisor, urging the agency to include local agencies and officials in full participation in the post-fire mitigation, stabilization and prevention efforts. Congressman Gallegly's staff also contacted the USFS Congressional Affairs Office on behalf of the County, and Senator Boxer sent a letter urging that all Counties in California affected by the fires be given a seat at the table in the BAER process.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

After Transportation Secretary Mary Peters announced that the Highway Trust Fund would reach a zero balance later this month, we contacted Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Minority Member Grassley (R-IA) to urge them to expedite Senate action on H.R. 6532, the *Highway Trust Fund Restoration Act*,

which would restore \$8 billion to the fund. We also asked Senators Boxer and Feinstein to advocate for action on the measure, citing the impact on transportation projects in the County if the fund is not quickly replenished. The House approved H.R. 6532 on July 23.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

We contacted the members of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees to advocate in support of reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act, emphasizing the need for adequate resources for local agencies such as the County to provide a full range of prevention, early intervention and community-based options. Just before the August recess, the Judiciary Committee marked up and approved Chairman Leahy's (D-VT) S. 3155, the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2008*. While companion legislation has not yet been introduced in the House, the House Judiciary Committee has scheduled hearings on the issue for this week.

ELDER ABUSE

We reiterated support for S. 1070, the *Elder Justice Act*, and urged the Senate Finance Committee to take action on the measure, which would establish grant programs aimed at reducing physical abuse, financial exploitation and neglect of elderly people by family members or personnel in institutions and residential care facilities. The committee has announced that it will take up the bill when Congress returns in September.

AGRICULTURE

As the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the *FY 2009 Agriculture Appropriations* bill, we reiterated support for County pest control efforts to Senator Feinstein, who serves on the committee. The committee included \$738,000 for California County Agricultural Import Inspection and \$619,000 for California County Pest Detection in its bill.

HOMELESSNESS

We also continued to advocate in support of action on legislation to reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, citing the nearly 6,300 homeless adults and children in the County, and the valuable resources to address homelessness that the Act provides. Just before Congress adjourned for the August recess, the House Financial Services Committee marked up and approved H.R. 840, the *Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act*, which would reauthorize the McKinney Act and consolidate several assistance programs for the homeless.

PUBLIC SERVICE INCENTIVES

We continued to monitor activity on legislation to provide incentives for service in the public sector. When House and Senate conferees reached agreement on H.R. 4137, the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, they included the provisions from Congressman Scott's (D-GA) H.R. 916, the *John R. Justice Prosecutors and Defenders Incentive Act*, establishing a Loan Repayment for Prosecutors and Public Defenders program for full-time State and local prosecutors and public defenders who agree to a service agreement of at least three years. The legislation also provides for a similar loan repayment program for individuals employed in "areas of national need," which includes public sector employees in the fields of public safety, emergency management, public health, and public interest legal services. President Bush signed the measure into law on August 14.

v Tom Walters v