

# Washington Update

**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

**June 25, 2013**

## **IMMIGRATION REFORM**

As the full Senate continued debate on S. 744, the *Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act*, we continued to reiterate your Board's support for comprehensive reform as expressed in the framework adopted by NACo. The debate is expected to continue throughout this week, with numerous amendments still pending. In the House, the Judiciary Committee is set to begin its piecemeal approach to addressing immigration reform, with several bills anticipated for consideration and markup. These include Chairman Goodlatte's (R-VA) H.R. 1773, the *Agricultural Guest Worker Act*, which would create a new H-2C work visa program, and Congressman Gowdy's (R-SC) H.R. 2278, the *Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act*, which would address immigration enforcement and includes provisions of concern related to State and local law enforcement.

## **FARM BILL**

On June 10, the full Senate approved its version of the 2013 Farm Bill as S. 954, the *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013*, by a bipartisan vote of 66-27. The Senate-approved measure includes authorization of the Section 10210 Pest Detection program that supports California county pest detection efforts, as well as various provisions relevant to specialty crops, which includes most crops grown in the County and the State. This includes an adjustment to the Specialty Crops Block Grant that recognizes crop value as well as acreage. Subsequently, the House began debate on its Farm Bill, H.R. 1947, the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013*, and we continued to emphasize the importance of the legislation to local farmers, residents and the County's agricultural industry. One of the biggest points of contention in the House bill was its proposed cuts to SNAP of \$20.5 billion over 10 years. In a stunning development, when Speaker Boehner (R-OH) brought H.R.

1947 to the House floor for consideration on June 20, it did not garner enough support from either Republicans or Democrats and failed by a vote of 195-234. While current authority for most agriculture programs runs through September 30, 2013, at this point there is no consensus on how Congress will proceed with what is usually a bipartisan piece of legislation.

## **WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT**

In anticipation of its June 20<sup>th</sup> hearing, we contacted the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to reiterate the County's support for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), including: program enhancements that strengthen local governance; improvement of partner program investment for coordinated services through local One-Stop systems; and enhancement of flexibility in the uses of funds for services to employed workers and youth jobs programs. While WIA reauthorization has not yet been introduced, Chairman Harkin (D-IA) indicated at the hearing that the committee would be working on legislation in the next few weeks, and singled out bipartisan efforts by Senators Murray (D-WA) and Isakson (R-GA). The House narrowly approved its version of WIA reauthorization as H.R. 803 in March, with numerous members indicating that they wanted to improve that bill in negotiations with the Senate.

## **PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES**

We urged the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to take action on legislation to extend full funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program and the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). PILT partially offsets the impacts of national forests and other public lands in the County, while SRS can be used for County road improvement and maintenance projects or wildfire risk reduction in addition to schools. The County will receive \$1.7 million in PILT funding for FY 2013

and \$58,818 from SRS, but this is the last year for which full funding is guaranteed. While language to extend SRS funding for one year was added during the June 18 Senate Energy Committee markup of S. 783, the *Helium Stewardship Act*, legislation to extend full PILT funding has not yet been introduced.

#### **MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS**

We urged Chairman Leahy (D-VT) and Ranking Minority Member Grassley (R-IA) of the Senate Judiciary Committee to expedite consideration of Senator Franken's (D-MN) S. 162, the *Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act*. The measure would reauthorize and improve the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) of 2004, including providing grants for improved mental health treatment services for mentally ill offenders, and giving local officials greater control over program participation eligibility. The bill has bipartisan support, and both Chairman Leahy and Ranking Minority Member Grassley are original cosponsors. The committee approved S. 162 on June 20, and it is now pending action by the full Senate. In the House, companion legislation has been introduced as H.R. 401 by Congressman Nugent (R-FL) and referred to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, also with bipartisan support.

#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

We contacted Chairman Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Ranking Minority Member Scott (D-VA) on behalf of the County and District Attorney Dudley to advocate in support of Congresswoman Capps' H.R. 1177, the *Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act*. Modeled on California law, the measure would make several amendments to the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, including modifying the definition of "intimate partner" to include a dating partner or former dating partner of a person, and extending firearms-related restrictions to individuals under domestic violence court ordered restraints. The prognosis for action on the bill is unclear in light of the defeat of legislation to address gun violence earlier in the year.

#### **JUSTICE FOR ALL ACT**

We contacted members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senators Boxer and Feinstein in support of Committee Chairman Leahy's (D-VT) S. 822, the *Justice For All Reauthorization Act*. The measure would extend the authorization of a variety of programs implemented in the original Justice For All Act, including the Crime Victims' Rights Act, the Debbie Smith Act, the Coverdell Forensics Science Improvement Grant Program, and the Innocence Protection Act. It would also improve support services for crime victims, enhance state and local governments' use of DNA evidence, and make units of local government eligible for grants under the Capital Representation Improvement Grants and the Capital Prosecution Improvement Grants programs. Chairman Leahy has not yet scheduled action on S. 822, and companion legislation has not been introduced in the House.

v Tom Walters v