

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 2, 2013

FY 2014 APPROPRIATIONS

With no progress having been made during the month of September, Congress began working on a Continuing Resolution (CR) to buy time for a divided Congress to continue negotiations on the twelve appropriations bills that fund the Federal government. As has been well-publicized in the news media, the House approved a FY 2014 Continuing Resolution that would have funded Federal agencies and programs at FY 2013 levels through December 15, 2013. But the decision by House Republicans to include provisions that would defund the Affordable Care Act at a critical point in its implementation ultimately doomed its success. Senate Democrats adamantly refused to accept those provisions, and after a series of back and forth offers in which both sides dug in their heels, the new Fiscal Year dawned on October 1 with the first shutdown of the Federal government since 1995. That shutdown lasted twenty-two days and at this point it is difficult to ascertain how long this one will last. However, with the next fiscal crisis regarding the Federal debt ceiling expected in mid-October, there is some speculation that the two crises will merge and be addressed simultaneously. In the meantime, we have provided County staff with various agency-by-agency summaries of potential impacts of the shutdown, including the document put together by the National Association of Counties (NACo).

FARM BILL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

As the House prepared to debate H.R. 3102, the *Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act*, we reiterated concerns with the proposed cuts of \$40 billion over 10 years to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) contained in the bill. These provisions had been dropped from the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill when it was approved by the full House last summer to appease certain constituencies who were

arguing for deeper cuts in SNAP benefits. We cited the fact that over 30,000 County residents currently receive SNAP benefits, and that these cuts would put extra pressure on the local public safety net, including the County and underfunded community-based organizations. H.R. 3102 was approved on September 19 on a largely party-line vote. Since the Senate-passed Farm Bill included the traditional agricultural nutrition programs, the provisions of H.R. 3102 will be considered by House and Senate conferees negotiating the final version of the Farm Bill. The Senate announced its appointees to participate in the conference this week, and is awaiting word from the House regarding its appointees.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

We contacted House Speaker Boehner (R-OH) and the House Judiciary Committee to once again reiterate your Board's support for comprehensive immigration reform similar to the principles included in S. 744, the *Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act*, which was approved by the Senate last June. We expressed concern that the window of opportunity for Congress to successfully negotiate meaningful immigration reform legislation is rapidly narrowing, and urged them to expedite action. Both Speaker Boehner and Judiciary Committee Chairman Goodlatte (R-VA) continue to insist that immigration reform remains on the House agenda for the autumn, despite the energy that will have to be devoted to the FY 2014 funding and debt ceiling issues. The House leadership has opted for a piecemeal approach to immigration reform as opposed to the Senate's comprehensive approach. The committee has already approved two measures - 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

Washington Update – October 2, 2013

would address immigration enforcement and includes provisions related to State and local law enforcement – and Chairman Goodlatte has indicated he will shortly introduce an additional four immigration-related proposals.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

After House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Shuster (R-PA) introduced H.R. 3080, the *Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 (WRRDA 2013)*, we contacted the committee to advocate the County's interests in anticipation of the September 19 markup of the legislation. The measure includes provisions that would direct that the Corps' vegetation management policy be reviewed and revised to take into account regional characteristics and habitat for species of concern. It would also establish a Public-Private Partnership Pilot Program and increase opportunities for non-Federal interests to support or expedite projects. We specifically advocated against provisions that could lead to the de-authorization of projects such as Lower Mission Creek that have not yet received construction funding from the Federal government, arguing that the focus should be on a project's merits, not its funding streams. The committee approved H.R. 3080 and it is now awaiting consideration by the full House, pending issuance of the committee report to accompany the bill.

FEMA APPEAL

We continue to work with Public Works Director McGolpin in support of the County's appeal of Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) decision to de-obligate more than \$1 million for emergency road work during the 2005 winter storms, based on an Office of the Inspector General audit. After the California Legislative Counsel Bureau prepared a legal opinion at the request of California State Assemblyman Das Williams regarding the authorities of California Road Commissioners to perform repair and emergency work, we provided the report to Congresswoman Capps and asked her to assist in expediting its transmittal to FEMA. We worked with her staff in drafting a letter that both conveyed the report and reiterated the Congresswoman's support for the County's appeal. The letter was sent to FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate in September. We also provided the report to Senators Feinstein and Boxer and requested their support.

PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING

In mid-September, Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius announced awards to a variety of health center nationwide to support ongoing operations and quality improvement activities. We were informed that the County of Santa Barbara Public Health Department has been awarded \$54,053 for these activities.

v Tom Walters v