

# Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

May 23, 2013

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

As the Senate Judiciary Committee began marking up and amending S. 744, the *Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act*, we continued to advocate your Board's support for the policy framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform adopted by NACo. NACo's policy is consistent with the structure for comprehensive immigration reform proposed by the bipartisan Gang of Eight Senators that is the basis for S. 744. Debate began on May 8, and over 200 amendments were considered by the committee in a series of marathon sessions, many of them attempts to derail the immigration reform effort. On May 22, the Committee finally completed work on its markup, and voted 13-5 to refer S. 744 to the full Senate for consideration. The Gang of Eight's framework remained intact, and Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) has indicated that floor debate will begin when Congress returns from the Memorial Day recess the week of June 3.

## IMMIGRATION REFORM - SCAAP

During the markup of S. 744, we were alerted by Senator Feinstein's staff that she would be offering an amendment that would reauthorize the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP), and confirm the ability for local governments to be reimbursed for costs associated with pre-adjudicated as well as convicted criminal illegal aliens. This provision is very significant to the County. In 2003, the Department of Justice reinterpreted the SCAAP statute no longer allowed local governments to file claims for incarcerated undocumented aliens not yet convicted, causing Santa Barbara's SCAAP reimbursements to drop from \$865,000 to under \$400,000 the next year, and in that range in subsequent years. We immediately began working with CSAC and other County advocates in support of the Senator's amendment, and it was ultimately adopted by a close, 10-8 margin. Senator Feinstein also successfully offered a

variety of other amendments to the legislation, including the authorization of funding for immigration-related criminal prosecution costs borne by State and local governments, and the requirement that funding to local law enforcement under the Operation Stonegarden program be awarded through a competitive process.

## FY 2014 APPROPRIATIONS

The Homeland Security Appropriations bill is traditionally one of the first spending measures drafted, and we contacted the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to reiterate the County's homeland security and emergency response priorities in anticipation of action on the *FY 2014 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill. We urged them to adequately fund local emergency response and disaster preparedness activities. We also asked them to fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program at the highest possible level, and emphasized the critical importance of Emergency Management Performance Grants to the County's emergency preparedness responsibilities. Earlier today, the House Appropriations Committee marked up the *FY 2014 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill. The bill would provide a total of \$1.5 billion for State and Local Programs, a slight, \$35.4 million increase over FY 2013. It also proposes \$675 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants, including \$337.5 million for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants, and \$350 million for EMPG, essentially providing level funding for these programs.

## WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

As Senate floor debate began on Senator Boxer's S. 601, the *Water Resources Development Act of 2013 (WRDA 2013)*, we continued to advocate in support elements of the bill that would benefit the County, including standards and a process for the Army Corps of Engineers to authorize or amend projects, review and implementation of the Corps'

Vegetation Management Policy, and development of a non-Federal project implementation pilot program. We also advocated the County's support for a proposed amendment that would establish a Federal project authority for the implementation of Regional Sediment Management projects on the coast of California. While a California-specific project was not authorized, language was included that would enhance the Corps ability to engage in regional sediment management efforts, including cooperating with any State or group of States. S. 601 was overwhelmingly approved by a vote of 83-14 on May 15.

### **OLDER AMERICANS**

As part of our ongoing follow-up to Supervisor Carbajal's meetings with the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction during his January advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., we continue to lobby the County's support for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA). We recently provided the House Education & Workforce Committee and the Senate HELP Subcommittee on Aging with the Position Paper generated by County staff that lays out specific recommendations for OAA reauthorization, and the material was particularly timely in the Senate. HELP Aging Subcommittee Chairman Sanders (I-VT) is preparing to introduce the *Older Americans Act Amendments of 2013*, and his staff provided us with his current draft, as well as a one page summary and section-by-section description. We have in turn shared the draft bill with County staff for feedback. While introduction of the Senate bill may be imminent, the outlook is less clear in the House. Committee staff continue to assure us that OAA is on the committee's "To Do" list but have not indicated when it will rise to the level of actual consideration.

### **FARM BILL**

We contacted the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in anticipation of action on a 2013 Farm bill, emphasizing the importance of the legislation to local farmers, residents and the County's \$1 billion agricultural industry. In particular, we emphasized the need for adequate resources in the areas of pest and disease management, and invasive noxious weed management. On May 14, the Senate committee approved S. 954, the *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013*, which included authorization of the Section 10210 Pest Detection program that supports California county pest detection efforts. The full Senate began floor consideration of the measure on May 22, but is not expected to complete action on the legislation until after the Memorial Day recess due to the large number of proposed amendments, including those that would address a controversial \$4 billion reduction in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly known as Food Stamps. Already, a proposed amendment that would convert SNAP from an entitlement program to a block grant to States has been defeated.

In the House, the Agriculture Committee approved H.R. 1947, the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act*, on May 15. One of the biggest points of contention in the House bill is its proposed cuts to SNAP of \$20.5 billion over 10 years. However, the bill does include the provisions we advocated to reauthorize the Section 10210 Pest detection program. H.R. 1947 will likely be considered by the full House in June.

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