

# Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

July 23, 2014

## HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

We continue to closely monitor Congressional efforts to address the impending insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund, emphasizing to the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction and our local Congressional delegation the potential impacts on local governments if it runs out of money. The Trust Fund is in trouble because revenues deposited into the Account from motor fuels taxes are not sufficient to cover spending on highway and transit programs. While in the past this has required transfers from the General Fund to cover the spending authorized by MAP-21, it is reaching a crisis point this summer. The Congressional Budget Office reported in mid-June that an additional \$8 billion is needed to meet the obligations to highway and transit programs through the end of the year. On July 15, the House approved H.R. 5021, the *Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014*, which would provide a short term funding patch of \$10.8 billion in new revenue to enable the Trust Fund to meet its financial obligations through the end of next May. In voting for the measure, Congresswoman Capps enumerated specific impacts in the County if the Trust Fund were to lapse. The Senate is in the process of considering its version of the legislation, with the goal of reaching a final consensus before Congress leaves for the August recess.

## WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

We joined other relevant stakeholders in urging Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) to schedule floor action on H.R. 803, the *Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act*. In May, the House and Senate committees reached a bipartisan agreement on final legislative language for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, and it was amended into H.R. 803. For logistical reasons, House leaders would not take up the legislation until it had been approved by the Senate. On June 25, the measure was overwhelmingly approved by

the full Senate by a 95-3 vote. The negotiated compromise will eliminate 15 federal job training programs and place a focus on training for "in demand" jobs. The House subsequently approved H.R. 803 by a 415-6 margin, and it was sent to President Obama on July 15. He is expected to sign it into law.

## FY 2015 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

It was anticipated that passage of the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013* and completion of the *FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act* in January would help to make the FY 2015 appropriations process flow more smoothly than in recent years. While the House has made significant progress in both drafting and passing the various FY 2015 spending measures, Senate floor action on appropriations bills has become mired in a procedural standoff over a variety of proposed amendments geared towards impacting individual races in the November elections. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) and Ranking Minority Member McConnell (R-KY) remain at loggerheads on how to proceed, and completion of the spending bills before the October 1 beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year is once again in jeopardy. However, the Senate Appropriations Committee is continuing its work of drafting the actual bills, and we continue to advocate the County's priorities as they do so.

## PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

We continue to work with NACo and other County stakeholders to advocate for extension of full funding authority for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The 2014 Farm Bill extended the existing authorization through FY 2014, and Chairman Calvert (R-CA) of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee has included language extending the authorization another year in his draft of the *FY 2015 Interior Appropriations* bill. We have also urged Chairman Reed (D-RI) of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee to include similar provisions when the

Senate drafts its version of the Interior Department spending measure. The County received \$1.82 million in PILT for FY 2014.

**OLDER AMERICANS ACT**

We continued to lobby the County's support for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA), emphasizing the wide range of critical services it supports for the County's elderly populations. In the Senate, HELP Aging Subcommittee Chairman Sanders' (I-VT) S. 1562, the *Older Americans Act Amendments* was placed on the Legislative Calendar under General Orders earlier in the year, and we urged Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) to schedule full Senate consideration of the proposal. Companion legislation still has not been introduced in the House, although initial hearings have been held by the Education and the Workforce Committee. The recent completion of negotiations between the House and Senate committees on reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act may enable them to move forward on OAA.

**TRIBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We joined CSAC in asking Interior Secretary Sally Jewel to extend the comment period for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Proposed Rule, published May 29, which would revise regulations governing the process and criteria by which the Secretary acknowledges an Indian tribe. The proposed regulations are very detailed and complex, and we stressed that, since the acknowledgement process can be a precursor to Tribes taking land into trust for gaming and other non-gaming development, counties such as Santa Barbara have a significant interest in these regulations because they could have a significant impact on local land use. We also asked Congresswoman Capps and Senators Boxer and Feinstein to weigh in with Secretary Jewell regarding the comment period. CSAC is also pushing for BIA to hold additional hearings on the Proposed Rule in California.

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