

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

November 1, 2017

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

We continue to work with NACo and other advocacy groups to lobby for action on legislation to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP provides 11,000 children in Santa Barbara County with comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage, and the September 30 expiration of the existing authorization jeopardizes ongoing funding for the program. Later today (November 1), the House Rules Committee is scheduled to take action to combine H.R. 3911, the *Helping Ensure Access for Little Ones, Toddlers, and Hopeful Youth by Keeping Insurance Delivery Stable (HEALTHY KIDS) Act*, with H.R. 3922, the *Community Health and Medical Professionals Improve Our Nation (CHAMPION) Act*, and prepare the package for floor consideration later this week. H.R. 3911 would reauthorize CHIP for 5 years and keep in place the current 23% boost in Federal matching rates for the first 2 years, while H.R. 3922 would extend the authorization of funding for Community Health Centers for two years, at \$3.6 billion a year. The vote at both the Rules Committee and full House level is expected to be along party lines at this point, as House Democrats continue to oppose the offsets included in the legislation. In the Senate, floor consideration has not yet been scheduled for S. 1827, the *Keep Kids' Insurance Dependable and Secure (KIDS) Act* which would also reauthorize CHIP for 5 years and keep in place the 23% boost in Federal matching rates for 2 years. S. 1827 has bipartisan support and was approved by the Senate Finance Committee by voice vote early in October. However, so far there has been no action on S. 1899, the *Community Health Investment, Modernization, and Excellence Act*, which also has strong bipartisan support.

TAX REFORM

On October 26, Congress completed work on a FY 2018 Budget Resolution that significantly boosted Republican efforts to restructure the tax code. Adoption of the Budget Resolution

sets up the process for the House and the Senate to use a budget reconciliation bill to enact tax reform using expedited legislative procedures similar to those attempted regarding health care. For example, in the Senate, a simple majority will be needed for passage, instead of the sixty votes usually needed to bring legislation to the floor.

The legislation is expected to follow the broad outlines of the Tax Reform Framework released in September, and at this point there is no Democratic support for the proposal. That framework proposed major reductions in both Corporate and Individual income tax rates, partially offset by eliminating many deductions, possibly including deductions for State and local taxes (SALT). House Republican leaders were expected to release the draft today, but the release has been postponed because of ongoing negotiations on some issues, including SALT. Support for eliminating the deduction has eroded amongst Republican members from States like California, New York and New Jersey with significant local taxes. Republican Leaders have reportedly offered to retain the deduction for property taxes, but deductions for State and local income taxes are still on the table. Once the legislation is introduced, an aggressive committee markup schedule is planned for November.

INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE

The draft tax legislation may also include provisions to support the President's proposal to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure over ten years. One of the major issues holding up the Infrastructure Initiative has been the lack of a financing mechanism. The Framework for Tax Reform did include a statement that corporate tax provisions would allow for a one-time repatriation of overseas profits, which is widely viewed as a potential source of revenue to help pay for new infrastructure projects. In addition, the Trump Administration recently rekindled discussion over the possibility of an increase in

the Federal tax on motor fuels to increase funding for the Highway Trust Fund.

ADULT SERVICES

We continued to advocate the County's support for Federal resources to enable it to respond effectively to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults, as well as to enhance elder abuse prosecution and prevention programs. In anticipation of House action, we contacted the House Judiciary Committee and Congressman Carbajal to reiterate support for S. 178, the *Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act*, which is intended to address elder abuse and exploitation, and improve the justice system's response to victims in elder abuse and exploitation cases. S. 178 was subsequently approved by the full House by voice vote, and was signed into law by the President on October 18.

ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS

In anticipation of consideration by the full Senate, we reiterated support for Senator McCain's (R-AZ) S. 829, the *AFG and SAFER Program Reauthorization Act of 2017*, which would reauthorize the Assistance to Firefighters Grants and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants Programs. In addition to reauthorizing these programs through FY 2023, the measure would make certain modifications to them, including authorizing the use of AFG Program grants to provide specialized training to first responders on how to recognize and properly intervene with individuals with mental illness. S. 829 was approved by unanimous consent, and companion legislation has been introduced in the House as H.R. 3881.

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Telephone: (805) 568-2190
www.countyofsb.org

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Carbajal:

I have sent the enclosed letters on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara to the House Committees on the Judiciary and Energy and Commerce, expressing support for legislation to increase Federal resources for local Adult Protective Services (APS) to help ensure the health and well-being of older adults and seniors in the community.

According to the most recent Census, there are over 57,000 adults age 65 or above living in Santa Barbara – 13% of the County’s total population. With the increase in this population comes an increase in elder abuse related incidences. Last year, there were more than 1700 reported cases in Santa Barbara County, and this year is on pace to exceed that total.

Elders have special circumstances - such as dependency, functional disability, minority status, age, and poor social networks - that make them more vulnerable to violence. In Santa Barbara County, the District Attorney’s Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse Unit coordinates with Adult Protective Services, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office and local law enforcement agencies and resources to help victims and families cope with the effects of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The Senate recently approved S. 178, the *Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act*, which would address elder abuse and exploitation and improve the justice system’s response to victims in elder abuse and exploitation cases. Please urge your colleagues who serve on the Judiciary and Energy and Commerce Committees to expedite action on S. 178 or similar legislation to provide Federal resources to help address senior abuse and neglect.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas P. Walters
Washington Representative

TPW:awg

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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Ronald Wyden
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

I am writing on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara to reiterate its support for expedited action on legislation to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

CHIP funding enables children in families with incomes up to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level to be covered under Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California). Currently, it provides 11,000 children in Santa Barbara County with comprehensive Medi-Cal coverage for a modest monthly premium and co-pays. It also provides benefits for certain pregnant women to receive health care during their pregnancy.

The current authorization for CHIP expired on September 30. It is estimated that CHIP funding for California will be exhausted early in 2018 if the program is not reauthorized. This would cause a devastating loss of coverage for many children both locally and nationwide. Please work with the members of your committee to take action to reauthorize CHIP as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas P. Walters
Washington Representative

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October 3, 2017

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Carbajal:

We have sent the accompanying letters on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board to the House Transportation Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, expressing support for H.R. 3682, the *Blue Whales and Blue Skies Act*.

Thank you for co-sponsoring H.R. 3682. As you know, the *Blue Whales and Blue Skies Act* would direct the Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to create a Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program to reduce air pollution and harmful underwater acoustic impacts and the risk of fatal vessel whale strikes by recognizing voluntary reductions in the speed of vessels transiting the Greater Santa Barbara Channel Region. The program would be modeled after the pilot Vessel Speed Reduction Program administered by the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (SBCAPCD), the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the Environmental Defense Center, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

In Santa Barbara County, the thousands of marine vessels that travel along the 130 miles coastline produce significant emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulates, air toxics, and greenhouse gases. SBCAPCD has estimated that more than half of the smog-forming NOx emissions in the County are from marine vessels transiting the Santa Barbara Channel (Channel). Emissions threaten air quality and public health, and constrain the County's ability to meet federal and state standards pertaining to ozone and particulates. H.R. 3682 would implement a voluntary vessel speed reduction program which would be a cost-effective strategy for providing significant emission reductions without placing additional burdens on local businesses.

Please urge your colleagues who serve on the subcommittee to expedite action on the *Blue Whales and Blue Skies Act* or similar legislation to help reduce air pollution and the risk of fatal vessel whale strikes in the Greater Santa Barbara Channel Region. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas P. Walters
Washington Representative