
REPORT

Thomas Walters & Associates, Inc.



TO: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors DATE: November 28, 2007

FROM: Thomas P. Walters

2007 INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT

The first session of the 110th Congress began with significant fanfare as a result of the “flip” of both Houses of Congress from Republican to Democratic control. The new Majority quickly faced the realities of leadership, including organizational responsibilities and the difficulty of moving forward on an ambitious agenda while dealing with Iraq War issues and having to finish up the FY 2007 appropriations bills left undone by the 109th Congress. The latter delayed work on the FY 2008 budget process, which was already complicated by indecision on how to best address perceived problems with the practice of earmarking specific projects, and very real differences in priorities between Congress and the Administration. As a result, only the FY 2008 Department of Defense Appropriations Act has been signed into law so far, even though the new Federal fiscal year began on October 1. President Bush vetoed the only domestic spending bill sent to him, and Congress must address its strategy for completing the FY 2008 appropriations process when it returns following the Thanksgiving recess.

Throughout the year, we have worked aggressively to implement a program of Federal advocacy for the County of Santa Barbara on a wide range of both funding and policy issues, and to establish the County’s presence in Washington, D.C. We have lobbied these issues on behalf of the County with Congressional members, staff and Administration representatives. Beginning in January, we advocated the County’s funding priorities in anticipation of the annual appropriations process, as well as your Board’s related legislative priorities. These priorities included: flood control and watershed projects; transportation funding; bioterrorism and emergency response funding; Medicare reimbursement rates for Federally Qualified Health Centers; reimbursements for the local impacts of illegal immigration; child support; social services and public assistance; Indian land issues; and the Outer Continental Shelf. In addition, we have advocated on behalf of Santa Barbara County on a wide range of issues impacting the County’s fiscal stability and delivery of services. We have worked closely with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and other relevant stakeholders on these issues, and during their respective trips to Washington, D.C., arranged meetings for Supervisors Carbajal and Wolf to advocate on critical County issues with members of the Santa Barbara County Congressional delegation, appropriate Congressional offices, and officials with the Administration.

Table of Contents

New Federal Funding/Appropriations	3
FY 2008 Appropriations Requests	3
Mission Creek Authorizing Legislation	3
Zaca Fire Emergency Funding	4
Continued Funding/Increased Reimbursement Rates	4
Bioterrorism and Pandemic Flu	4
Medicare Reimbursement Rates for FQHCs	5
SAFER	5
SCAAP	5
Legislative Support	6
Child Support	6
Social Services	7
Public Assistance	7
Indian Land Issues	7
Outer Continental Shelf	7
Other Issues	8
Unfunded Federal Mandates	8
Children's Health	8
Health Care Funding	9
Emergency Preparedness and Response	9
Public Safety	10
Methamphetamine Epidemic	11
Homelessness	11
Housing and Community Development	11
Elder Abuse	11
Food Stamp Act Reauthorization	12
Funding For 2-1-1 Systems	12
Agricultural Pests	12
Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)	12
Habitat Conservation Funding	13
Election Reform	13

New Federal Funding/Appropriations

FY 2008 Appropriations Requests

As the FY 2008 appropriations process began in earnest last winter, we contacted the offices of our local Congressional delegation and Senators Feinstein and Boxer on behalf of the County to discuss support for Santa Barbara County's specific funding proposals, including Lake Cachuma, the Santa Maria levee, the Mission Creek Project, equipment for the new Emergency Operations Center, renovation of the Lompoc Veterans Memorial Building, and road projects in the County. With the shift in Congress and the continuing scrutiny of the earmark or "members' request" process, both individual offices and the various appropriations subcommittees demanded a much more strenuous justification process, and we worked closely with County staff to generate and provide all needed information in a timely manner to meet their respective deadlines. During his advocacy trips to Washington, D.C., we arranged and participated in meetings for Supervisor Carbajal to reiterate the importance of the requests with the local Congressional delegation offices and appropriations committee staff. We also arranged for him to meet with Bureau of Reclamation officials to request the agency's support for funding for Lake Cachuma.

The FY 2008 appropriations process had been a difficult one, and we were constantly reminded that it would be a very tight budget year. We have continued to work closely with Congresswoman Capps, Congressman Gallegly and Senators Boxer and Feinstein on the County's funding priorities, and they have been very responsive. The Senate version of the *FY 2008 Energy and Water Appropriations* bill proposes \$750,000 for Lake Cachuma, \$500,000 for Lower Mission Creek, and \$300,000 for the Santa Maria Levee. The House version of the bill would provide \$2 million for Lake Cachuma. While it does not appear that funding will materialize for the remainder of the County's specific requests this year, they are well positioned for consideration in subsequent funding cycles.

Normally, the House and Senate would have convened conference committees on the domestic spending appropriations bills and sent them to the President before the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year on October 1. However, there have been few "normal" years of late, and the appropriations process is once again bogged down, in part because of President Bush's veto threats of any bills that exceed the funding levels proposed in his FY 2008 Budget Request. Before Thanksgiving, he vetoed the *FY 2008 Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill, and an attempted override of the veto in the House failed by two votes. Congressional leaders are currently exploring a variety of compromise strategies, including wrapping the measures into a single or multiple omnibus bills, and in essence splitting the difference between the President's budget and the funding levels in the individual bills. Congress has passed a second Continuing Resolution that keeps Federal agencies funded at FY 2007 levels through December 14.

Mission Creek Authorizing Legislation

We advocated for legislation to update the Federal authorization for work on the Lower Mission Creek project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In particular, we emphasized the importance of the project to Senator Boxer in her position as Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and kept

in contact with her staff. When the committee marked up and approved S. 1248, the *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007*, it included provisions to increase the authorization for Lower Mission Creek to \$30 million, including a \$15 million Federal share. As House and Senate conferees met to negotiate the final version of *WRDA* last summer, we continued to work with Senator Boxer and our local Congressional delegation in support of the increased authorization level. The final conference agreement included the necessary language. After President Bush vetoed the legislation this fall, we urged our local delegation and Senators Boxer and Feinstein to vote to override it. On November 6, the House successfully overrode the veto by a vote of 361-54, with both Congresswoman Capps and Congressman Gallegly supporting the override. The Senate followed suit two days later. On November 9, *WRDA 2007* became Public Law 110-114.

Zaca Fire Emergency Funding

We worked with County Public Works staff to seek Federal resources to address flood control issues in the aftermath of the Zaca fire. We briefed our local Congressional delegation and Senator Feinstein's office on the need for Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and worked with Congresswoman Capps to try to persuade the Army Corps of Engineers to authorize Emergency Advanced Measures (EAM) funding for work on the Santa Maria levees. While the Corps has denied the request for EAM funding, we are continuing to work with Congresswoman Capps to explore other possibilities through the Corps. We are also continuing to work with Senator Feinstein's staff on her attempt to secure funding for the NRCS program, which is traditionally only funded as part of an emergency supplemental appropriations bill.

Continued Funding/Increased Reimbursement Rates

Bioterrorism and Pandemic Flu

We urged the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to provide adequate funding for local bioterrorism programs, reiterating the critical role that the County's public health infrastructure plays in responding to biological, chemical, and conventional threats. We specifically asked them to fund CDC's State and Local Capacity program, and what is now called the Hospital Preparedness Cooperative Agreements Grant Program. When the Senate drafted its *FY 2008 Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill, it proposed \$760.4 million for upgrading State and local bioterrorism preparedness capacity, and \$438.8 million for bioterrorism hospital grants. After the House-approved version of the spending bill proposed \$789.9 million for upgrading State and local bioterrorism preparedness capacity and \$414 million for bioterrorism hospital grants, we urged House and Senate conferees on the Labor/HHS appropriations measure to fund the two programs at the highest levels possible. The conference agreement vetoed by President Bush in November proposed \$785.2 million for CDC's State and Local Capacity program, and \$442.2 million for the hospital grants.

We arranged and participated in a meeting for Supervisor Carbajal with Health and Human Services officials during his January Washington D.C. trip to discuss the County's efforts to prepare for an influenza pandemic. He also queried the officials regarding additional potential Federal resources for these efforts. We subsequently

provided County public health staff with the agency's interim guidance entitled, *Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation*, which focuses on non-pharmaceutical interventions to slow the spread of pandemic diseases

Medicare Reimbursement Rates for FQHCs

We advocated the County's support for legislation to provide equitable reimbursement for Medicare services it provides as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). During her Washington, D.C. trip to testify on Congresswoman Capps' *Heart Disease Education, Analysis Research, and Treatment (HEART) for Women Act*, we arranged for Supervisor Wolf to meet with Congressman Gallegly's health care staff to advocate in support of legislation to eliminate the outdated cap on Medicare FQHC reimbursements. We also contacted Senate HELP Committee Chairman Kennedy (D-MA) to advocate in support of S. 941, the *Community Health Centers Investment Act*, which includes provisions to eliminate the cap and provide fair reimbursements for FQHCs. We emphasized that the existing cap results in over \$1.2 million in unreimbursed health care costs to the County's FQHC. When Congressman Weiner (D-NY) introduced H.R. 2897, the *Medicare Access to Community Health Centers Act*, in July, we immediately contacted the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees to urge action on the measure. The bill would establish new rates for FQHCs and increase rates annually based on the Medicare Economic Index. This autumn, Senator Bingaman (D-NM) introduced companion legislation as S. 2188, and we have urged the Senate Finance Committee to expedite action on it. While hearings have not yet been scheduled on either bill, there are indications that Congress will take up an omnibus Medicare bill to address issues such as the impending cuts in Medicare physician reimbursement rates, and we will advocate for inclusion of the FQHC proposal.

SAFER

We contacted the House and Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittees to advocate the County's support for funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants. When the House subcommittee drafted the *FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill, it recommended \$230 million for SAFER, doubling the FY 2007 appropriations level. The Senate subcommittee proposed increasing the program by \$35 million over FY 2007, to \$140 million. The House and Senate committee reports accompanying their respective versions of the funding bill both express concerns with the manner in which the Department has administered the grant program, and call for its overhaul. While the House and Senate have both passed the legislation, a conference committee has not yet been convened to negotiate the final funding level for SAFER and other DHS programs.

SCAAP

Early in the year, we made local Congressional delegation members aware that the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) still had not released FY 2006 reimbursements under the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). We contacted BJA directly regarding the FY 2006 reimbursements, and were told that there was a technical problem in the validation of critical data by the Department of Homeland Security. We continued to work with the delegation to pressure BJA to release the funding, and, after many months of delay, we were informed by BJA in late June that the County will receive \$583,205 as its share of FY 2006 SCAAP reimburse-

ments to offset the costs of incarcerating illegal alien criminals. We also discussed the process for the distribution of FY 2007 SCAAP reimbursements with BJA, and provided County staff with information on the agency's application process. On November 15, BJA announced the County will receive \$560,881 in SCAAP reimbursements for FY 2007.

Last year, President Bush signed legislation that increased the authorized level for SCAAP to \$950 million. Despite this increased authorization, the Administration once again proposed the elimination of SCAAP in its FY 2008 Budget proposal. We reiterated the importance of SCAAP to the local delegation and asked them to join other California Congressional members in sending a delegation letter of support to the Appropriations Committee. We also urged members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to fully fund SCAAP when they drafted the *FY 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science, (CJS) and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill. After we learned that the House subcommittee of jurisdiction proposed decreasing SCAAP by \$40 million to \$375 million in its draft of the FY 2008 CJS spending measure, we immediately began working with CSAC, Los Angeles County and other stakeholders to lobby for an increase to at least last year's level. During full committee consideration of the bill, Congressman Honda (D-CA) successfully amended in a provision to bring SCAAP to the \$405 million level. Subsequently, we worked with nationwide stakeholders to increase SCAAP even more during floor debate on the CJS bill. An amendment to add an additional \$55 million to SCAAP was approved by a vote of 388-39. The Senate Appropriations Committee proposed \$400 million for SCAAP when it marked up the CJS bill.

After the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees and Border Security approved Congresswoman Sanchez' (D-CA) H.R. 1512, to broaden SCAAP to allow for reimbursements for incarcerating illegal aliens prior to conviction, we contacted Chairman Conyers (D-MI) and Ranking Minority Member Smith (R-TX) to urge expedited full committee consideration of the measure. The Judiciary Committee approved and ordered the measure reported on October 24, and it is pending consideration by the full House once the report is issued. The change would reverse a Bush Administration policy interpretation that caused the County's SCAAP reimbursements to plunge from \$1.04 million in FY 2001 to \$358,242 in FY 2003.

Legislative Support

Child Support

The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 included provisions that eliminated the ability of States and counties to use child support incentive awards as a match to draw down additional Federal funds to aid in the collection of child support payments. Since the provisions will reduce California's Title IV-D Child Support Program by approximately \$90 million annually, resulting in a significant loss of funding for the County's child support enforcement efforts, we are aggressively advocating in support of legislation to reverse the DRA provisions. In the House, Chairman McDermott (D-WA) of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support has introduced H.R. 1386, the *Child Support Protection Act*, and Senator Rockefeller (D-WV), Chairman of the Senate Finance Sub-

committee on Health Care, introduced a companion bill in the Senate as S. 803. We urged both committees to take action on the proposal as soon as possible, and asked members of our delegation and Senators Boxer and Feinstein to cosponsor the respective bills. Hearings have not yet been scheduled.

Social Services

We contacted the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees to express concerns regarding changes to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program to be implemented as a result of the TANF reauthorization included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. We reiterated the need for local flexibility if the County and other State and local governments are to effectively administer TANF, as well as the need for reasonable performance standards and adequate support services. While neither committee has scheduled hearings on TANF this year, the Congressional Research Service prepared a report for them, entitled, *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Issues for the 110th Congress*. We have provided a copy of the report to County staff for their review.

Public Assistance

We advocated your Board's support for efforts to repeal requirements implemented by the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 that require the documentation of residency in order to receive Federal reimbursements for providing health and other public assistance services. When the Senate drafted its legislation to reauthorize and expand SCHIP as S. 1893, the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*, it included provisions that would relax the DRA citizenship verification requirements. The provisions were included in the version of the SCHIP reauthorization legislation ultimately approved by the House and Senate as H.R. 976, which was subsequently vetoed by President Bush. The language has become a major point of contention in ongoing negotiations between the House and Senate on veto-proof SCHIP reauthorization legislation, as House Republicans express concern that it would allow undocumented aliens to be eligible for the program.

Indian Land Issues

We closely monitored activity on Indian issues by the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs regarding potential legislative efforts to encourage government-to-government agreements that fully mitigate environmental and fiscal impacts, and legislation that would approve fee to trust applications that result in unnecessary loss of local control. Extensive mitigation requirements were included in comprehensive Indian gaming legislation that was almost completed in the 109th Congress, but the proposal's sponsor, then-Resources Committee Chairman Pombo (R-CA) was defeated for reelection, and the committee's new chairman, Congressman Rahall (D-WV), has not scheduled hearings or other action on legislation of significance to address these issues. In the Senate, the committee approved Chairman Dorgan's (D-ND) S. 2097, the *Native American Omnibus Technical Corrections Act* in September, but the measure did not address substantive issues related to impact mitigation.

Outer Continental Shelf

Following your Board's May 15 action, we contacted the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to advocate in support of Senator Boxer's S. 151, the *Califor-*

nia Ocean and Coastal Protection Act, which would ban new oil and gas leasing in Federal water off the coast. Senator Feinstein is a cosponsor of the measure, and we thanked both Senators for their efforts and urged them to push for committee action on the bill. Congresswoman Capps introduced a House companion in July as H.R. 2918, and we contacted the House Natural Resources Committee to urge consideration of the measure. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on either bill.

After learning of a proposed amendment to the Interior spending bill by Congressman Peterson (R-PA), we contacted the House Appropriations Committee to reiterate support for continuation of the existing moratorium on new Outer Continental Shelf activities. The amendment to end the moratorium and open the OCS to natural gas exploration was defeated 25-39.

Other Issues

Unfunded Federal Mandates

We contacted the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees to advocate in support of the *Withholding Tax Relief Act*. The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 included provisions mandating that State and local governments such as the County withhold 3% of payments to most vendors and contractors for Federal income tax purposes, beginning in 2009. Introduced by Senator Craig (R-ID) in the Senate as S. 777 and Congressman Meek (D-FL) in the House as H.R. 1023, the measure would repeal the provisions, which the Joint Committee on Taxation has acknowledged exceed the threshold specified in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. We also urged members of the local Congressional delegation and Senators Boxer and Feinstein to cosponsor the legislation, citing the bipartisan support for the proposal. When the House Ways and Means Committee marked up an IRS reform package in mid-July as H.R. 3056, the *Tax Collection Responsibility Act*, Congressman Herger (R-CA) successfully added an amendment that would delay implementation of the withholding requirement by one year, to January 1, 2012. H.R. 3056 was approved by the full House in October and referred to the Senate. It has been estimated that a full repeal would cost \$7 billion over 10 years.

Children's Health

We contacted the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction to provide them with the County's recommendations regarding reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), including increased eligibility flexibility, expanded coverage to include mental health, dental and other services, and funding at least equal to California's Child Health and Disability Prevention baseline. When Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Kennedy (D-MA) and Finance Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Hatch (R-UT) released their principles on SCHIP reauthorization on June 6, they included several of the proposals suggested by the County.

Throughout the year we continued to advocate the County's recommendations, and carefully monitored House and Senate activity on the issue. Before leaving for the August recess, both chambers passed legislation to reauthorize and expand SCHIP. The Senate approved S. 1893, the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*, while the House approved H.R. 3162, the *Children's Health and Medi-*

care Protection Act. In September, House and Senate negotiators announced that they had reached agreement on a compromise bill as H.R. 976, the *Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*. The measure proposed increasing SCHIP funding by \$35.7 billion over 5 years by increasing the tax on a pack of cigarettes by 61 cents. While the compromise was approved by both the House and Senate by significant margins, it was vetoed by President Bush. We lobbied our local Congressional delegation and Senators Boxer and Feinstein to vote to override the veto, but the override attempt fell short in the House. The House and Senate immediately began work on another attempt to SCHIP, and on October 24, H.R. 3963 was introduced and approved by the full House the next day. The Senate subsequently passed the bill on November 1. Certain changes were made to the bill in an attempt to draw enough Republican support in the House to override another anticipated veto by President Bush, but it appears that strategy was unsuccessful. It is likely that H.R. 3963 will not be sent to the President, and Senate Republican supporters of SCHIP are currently negotiating with their counterparts in the House in an effort to find a veto-proof compromise.

Health Care Funding

We attended the May 1 hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, at which Supervisor Wolf testified in support of Congresswoman Capps' H.R. 1014, the *Heart Disease Education, Analysis Research, and Treatment (HEART) for Women Act*, and arranged for Supervisor Wolf to meet with Congressman Gallegly's health care staff to advocate in support of the legislation. We also contacted Subcommittee Chairman Pallone (D-NJ) and Ranking Member Deal (R-GA) to expedite markup on the measure, and contacted members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to advocate in support of action on the Senate version of the proposal, Senator Stabenow's (D-MI) S. 573.

As the House and Senate Appropriations Committees began work on the *FY 2008 Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill, we advocated support for Federal public health funding that impacts the County. The Senate committee drafted its bill in June, and the House committee marked up its version in July. This fall, we urged members of the joint conference committee on the Labor/HHS funding bill to provide the highest level of funding possible for these programs. The conference agreement approved by the House and Senate in November provided \$2.21 billion for community health centers, \$1.77 billion for substance abuse block grants, \$493.6 million for immunizations, \$428 million for mental health block grants, \$310.9 million for family planning, and \$104 million for preventative health services block grants. However, the final bill was vetoed by President Bush, and an override of his veto failed by two votes.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

We contacted the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to urge them to adequately fund local homeland security and disaster preparedness and response activities, including funding to address the needs of public safety, public health, emergency management personnel, and communications infrastructure. We also asked them to fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, and emphasized the critical importance of Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) funding to the County's emergency preparedness responsibilities. The House

Appropriations Committee took up the *FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations* bill following the Memorial Day recess, and it was approved by the full House on June 15. The House-approved bill would increase funding for State Homeland Security and Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grants by \$50 million to \$950 million, increase EMPG by \$100 million to \$300 million, and provide \$800 million for firefighter grants, an increase of \$138 million. The bill also includes a provision that would require DHS to contact prisons and local jails monthly to identify incarcerated aliens who are candidates for deportation. The version of the measure drafted by the Senate Appropriations Committee in mid-June would provide \$900 million for State Homeland Security/Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grants, \$700 million for firefighter grants, and \$300 million for EMPG. Although the Homeland Security funding bill is typically one of the first appropriations bills completed by Congress, House and Senate conferees have not yet convened on the final version of the bill.

Public Safety

We worked with our local Delegation and Senator Feinstein on funding requests for the County's public safety needs in the *FY 2008 Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations* bill. We also contacted members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees regarding the County's public safety funding priorities, and urged members of the subcommittees to provide the highest level of funding possible for local public safety activities. When the Senate Appropriations Committee drafted its version of the CJS spending bill, it rejected the proposals contained in President Bush's FY 2008 Budget request that would have substantially curtailed funding for local public safety activities. The Senate bill provided an increase of \$550 million for State and local crime fighting initiatives. The amount includes: \$1.4 billion for the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants; \$550 million for Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS); \$390 million for violence against women prevention and prosecution programs; \$340 million for juvenile delinquency prevention and accountability; \$169 million to eliminate DNA analysis backlogs; \$110 million for law enforcement technologies, \$80 million for meth hot spots; \$40 million for forensic science improvement grants; \$10 million for offender re-entry; and \$10 million to reduce gang violence. When the House Appropriations Committee marked up its version of the measure in mid-July, it proposed \$1.315 billion overall for State and local law enforcement assistance, an increase of \$78.2 million. House and Senate conferees have not yet met to negotiate the final funding levels for these programs.

We advocated in support of legislation to reauthorize the COPS On the Beat Grant Program, citing its potential value to the County. In early May, the House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 1700, the *COPS Improvement Act*, and it was subsequently approved by the full House. Amongst other provisions, the bill would authorize \$600 million for anti-terrorism and intelligence activities, \$350 million for technology grants, and \$200 million for the grants to hire community prosecutors. Companion legislation was approved by the Senate Judiciary committee in May as S. 368 but has not yet been considered by the full Senate.

Methamphetamine Epidemic

We contacted the House and Senate Judiciary Committees to advocate in support of additional resources for local interdiction, prevention, and treatment strategies targeting the methamphetamine epidemic. In September, the House committee approved Congressman Cardoza's (D-CA) H.R. 1199, the *Drug Endangered Children Act*, which would extend the DEC grant program. In the Senate, Senator Durbin (D-IL) has introduced S. 1276, the *Methamphetamine Production Prevention Act*, and Senator Feinstein recently introduced S. 2071, the *Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act*. Senator Feinstein has also introduced a companion to the *Drug Endangered Children Act* as S. 1210.

Homelessness

Last winter, the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs announced awards issued under its FY 2006 Continuum of Care (CoC) competitive grant process for homeless assistance projects. We were informed that the County of Santa Barbara was awarded a \$294,346 CoC grant as part of the FY 2006 process.

We advocated support for reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction and our local Congressional delegation, citing the valuable resources the Act provides for addressing homelessness in the County. However, we expressed concerns with provisions included in Senator Reed's (D-RI) S. 1518, the *Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act*, which would mandate additional responsibilities for local homeless assistance programs without providing sufficient administrative funding. The Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee approved S. 1518 in September, and it is currently on the Legislative Calendar awaiting consideration by the full Senate. While hearings have been held in the House, a companion bill has not been introduced.

Housing and Community Development

We advocated for funding for housing and community development programs of significance to the County. The *FY 2008 Transportation, Treasury, HUD Appropriations* bill approved by a joint House-Senate conference committee in November includes \$3.8 billion for the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), \$1.76 billion for HOME Investment Partnerships, \$1.585 billion for homeless assistance grants, \$735 million for elderly housing, and \$300 million for Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS (HOPWA). While the House approved the conference agreement before the Thanksgiving recess, the Senate will not take it up until December.

Elder Abuse

We advocated the County's support for legislation to address elder abuse with members of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees. In the Senate, Senator Hatch (R-UT) re-introduced the *Elder Justice Act*, as S. 1070, and a companion bill was introduced in the House by Congressman Emanuel (D-IL) as H.R. 1783. The measure would establish grant programs aimed at reducing physical abuse, financial exploitation and neglect of elderly people by family members or personnel in institutions and residential care facilities. While there is broad bipartisan support, hearings have not yet been scheduled.

Food Stamp Act Reauthorization

We contacted the House and Senate Agriculture Committees to advocate in support of reauthorization of the Food Stamp Program. In July, the House Agriculture Committee completed work on the nutrition section of the H.R. 2417, the *Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act*, also known as the 2007 Farm Bill. Provisions included raising allowable deductions to expand program eligibility; increased funding for the Emergency Assistance Food Program; increased penalties for fraud violations; and completion of the transfer from food stamp coupons to EBT cards. It also approved amendments to rename the program as the Secure Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, and to establish a competitive grant program to develop and test solutions to combat obesity. The House approved H.R. 2417 late in July, and the full Senate is currently debating its version of the Farm Bill.

Funding For 2-1-1 Systems

We contacted the House Energy and Commerce and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committees to urge action on the *Calling for 2-1-1 Act*, which would authorize matching grants to implement and maintain 2-1-1 systems. The proposal was introduced in the House by Congresswoman Eshoo (D-CA) and in the Senate by Senators Clinton (D-NY) and Dole (R-NC). We also contacted our local Congressional delegation to request their support for the measures. Congresswoman Capps is a cosponsor of the House bill, and Senator Boxer has signed on to the Senate bill. Hearings have not yet been scheduled on either bill.

Agricultural Pests

We lobbied in support of agricultural pest detection and control programs, urging the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees to increase funding for the California County pest exclusion and detection program. Senator Feinstein serves on the Agriculture Appropriation Subcommittee, and we worked with her staff in particular in support of the funding. When the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the *FY 2008 Agriculture Appropriations* bill, it included \$831,000 for the California County Pest Detection Augmentation Program and \$990,000 for the California County Agricultural Import Inspection Program. The House Appropriations Committee also provided \$831,000 for the pest detection program in its version of the bill.

We also lobbied in support of Congressman Costa's (D-CA) H.R. 667, the *Early Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Act*, and its companion bill, Senator Boxer's S. 949, urging the respective House and Senate Agriculture Committees to take action on the proposal, possibly as part of the 2007 Farm Bill. H.R. 667 was incorporated into the version of the Farm Bill approved by the House last summer, but the Senate bill currently being debated does not include similar provisions.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)

We lobbied in support of increased funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, urging the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to fund PILT at the fully authorized level of \$340 million level in the *FY 2008 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill. When the House committee drafted its measure, it included \$233 million for PILT, the same level as the last two Federal fiscal years. As the full House debated the Interior spending bill, we

continued to lobby in support of increased funding for PILT, and a successful floor amendment increased the proposed FY 2008 funding by \$20 million to \$252.7 million. Subsequently, the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$233 million when it approved its version of the legislation. The County received \$1,014,138 through PILT for FY 2006, when the program was funded at \$236 million nationwide. When the House Natural Resources Committee approved H.R. 3058, the *Public Land Communities Transition Assistance Act* late in September, it included provisions that would increase PILT to its fully authorized level over the course of four years. The measure would also provide for a four year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which established a program for the sharing of Federal national forest revenues with surrounding counties. H.R. 3058 is currently pending consideration by the full House.

Habitat Conservation Funding

We monitored Congressional activity related to the Endangered Species Act, including additional Federal resources for habitat conservation plans under the Act. Late in September, Finance Committee Chairman Baucus (D-MT) held a committee markup of draft legislation entitled the *Habitat and Land Conservation Act of 2007*. The bill, subsequently numbered S. 2223, would establish tax credits for taxpayers who take voluntary measures to help protect and restore the habitats of protected species, and for the cost of specific actions recommended in approved habitat recovery plans. It is currently on the Senate Legislative Calendar pending consideration by the full Senate, and we have provided the committee's report to accompany the legislation to County staff for analysis to determine its potential usefulness.

Election Reform

We closely monitored Congressional activity regarding the elections process, and provided the County with a variety of bills that could impact local elections responsibilities, as well as testimony from several hearings. We contacted the House Administration Committee to express concerns with Congressman Holt's (D-NJ) H.R. 811, the *Voter Integrity and Verification Act*, including provisions that would require a State officer to audit and secure official ballots instead of the local Registrar of Voters. When the markup of H.R. 811 was scheduled in May, we contacted committee members to reiterate those concerns and argue that they would impose specific, impractical mandates for upcoming elections. The committee approved H.R. 811 along party lines, and it is pending consideration by the full House. In the Senate, Senator Feinstein chairs the Rules and Administration Committee, which has jurisdiction over Federal elections issues. Her committee held a series of hearings earlier in the year, and in May, she introduced her own election reform legislation as S. 1487, the *Ballot Integrity Act*. It is not likely that further action on either bill will occur in time to impact the 2008 elections.