

## Memorandum

**Date:** December 5, 2005  
**To:** Legislative Program Committee  
**From:** Lori Norton, Analyst  
**Subject:** Recommended Federal Legislative Priorities for the 110th Congressional Session - 2006  
**CC:** Jim Laponis, Deputy County Administrator



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### Background

In FY 2000-01, the County retained Waterman and Associates to provide Federal Advocacy Services. The County continued to contract with Waterman and Associates through June of 2005, with the Waterman's advocating or monitoring and reporting on issues identified annually by the County Board of Supervisors.

In June 2005, during Budget deliberations, the Board of Supervisors eliminated the County's Federal advocacy contract with Waterman and Associates, effective July 1, 2005. At that time, the County Executive Officer advised the Board that staff would develop a plan to allow the County to continue providing Federal advocacy services utilizing internal resources.

In October, staff presented and the Legislative Program Committee endorsed the following recommended plan for 2006. The recommended plan is as follows:

1. Continue the Board's practice of annually adopting 5-7 specific key Federal issue areas.
2. Continue the County's practice of coordinating federal advocacy efforts through the County Executive Office.
3. Expand the role of Board Members, as they are available and interested, in meeting with the County's Federal elected representatives to further the Board's adopted positions on key issue areas.
4. Expand the role of the County Executive Office, Department Directors and staff in identifying issues, preparing briefings for and meeting with the County's elected Federal representatives, etc. to advocate for the Board's adopted positions on key Federal issue areas.
5. Expand the County's participation by staff and Board Members, as they are available and interested, in the National Association of Counties (NaCo) as a means of participating in broader based legislative efforts of interest to Counties.

At the conclusion of their discussion, the Committee directed staff to proceed as recommended and to return with 5-7 Federal Priorities for 2006.

**Identification of Issues and Recommended Priorities**

As directed, staff contacted all County Departments to seek input in identifying 5-7 priority issues for 2006. Following is a brief summary of the issues identified, some of which have been on the Federal Priorities in years past:

**1. Lake Cachuma Surcharge Impacts**

Since 1953 the County of Santa Barbara has managed facilities at Lake Cachuma, providing a public regional recreational center under an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) in the Department of the Interior. The Bureau, based on a recommendation, by the National Marine Fisheries Services, to encourage the proliferation of steelhead trout, is raising the level of Lake Cachuma a minimum of three (3) feet. Raising the level of Lake Cachuma by three feet would inundate some County facilities, requiring their removal and rebuilding at an estimated cost of \$10 - 12 million. The County continues to seek federal funding for costs associated with the removal and rebuilding of the County's facilities.

In addition, the Parks Department has asked that the following related issues be monitored and advocated for:

- Bureau of Reclamation's Resource Management Plan (RMP) process for Cachuma Lake. The RMP is required as part of the Master Lease Agreement. Parks is hoping to expedite the RMP process.
- Bureau of Reclamation's Master Lease Agreement renegotiation process for Cachuma Lake. Parks is hoping to expedite the Master Lease Agreement process.

**2. Beach / Shore Erosion Projects**

The federal government has reduced federal funding for beach and shoreline erosion projects. The County would continue to seek opportunities to identify and seek federal funding for specific beach or shoreline erosion projects.

**3. Indian Lands / Tribal Gaming**

The County's primary interest in these areas is to balance the sovereign rights of Native Americans with the rights of local governments and the communities they represent. The County would continue to monitor Federal legislation, which may further expand the rights of Native Americans regarding Indian Gaming. Additionally, we would continue to monitor and report on Indian Lands Fee-to-Trust legislation, regulations, and specific proposals, which could impact Santa Barbara County.

**4. Emergency Operations Center Funding**

The Fire Department requested we continue to seek Federal to support the development of an EOC within the County. Santa Barbara County is in a prime location on the central coast for an Emergency Operations Center that would serve to protect existing Federal Assets and to pass coordination to FEMA in the event of a disaster. The cost to build and equip such a center is estimated to be \$6.3 M. Santa Barbara County is able to match with land and ongoing staffing. (Note: The Fire Department proposed a regional EOC,

however the Legislative Program Committee indicated an interest in seeking funds for an EOC to be located in Santa Barbara County.

It is recommended that the County request a Federal Assistance Grant of \$6.3 M. for the construction and communication equipment for an EOC.

**5. Storm Damage Payment**

The County has expended approximately \$8.9 for emergency repairs necessary for the purpose of reconstructing transportation facilities which were damaged as a result of severe rainstorms in December 2004 – January 2005. An additional \$6.7 million in permanent restoration project costs have been approved but have yet to be completed. To date, the County has not been reimbursed for any of the monies expended. As a result, the Roads Fund has had to borrow monies from the County General Fund. The borrowed funds will have to be repaid with interest which to date totals approximately \$35,000. Due to the lack of payment from the Federal Government all other Roads capital projects and general maintenance projects have been suspended and the Department is looking at potential staff reductions due to lack of funds.

The Public Works Department is seeking assistance to seek expedited repayment of funds from the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program. The Department has been working with other counties which have also expended funds and not been reimbursed.

**6. Seek Funding Opportunities for Purisima Road Improvements**

Supervisor Gray recently sent a request to Congressman Gallegly requesting his assistance seeking funds to improve Purisima Road in support of the California Space Authority in their efforts to build the California Space Center project at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

It is important to note the need for flexibility in our priorities. It is also understood that once resolution to an issue is achieved, another issue may be substituted. Further, if an issue which has not been identified here becomes a Board priority during the year, it will of course be added to the list of issues.

**Status of Previous Issues**

1. CDBG Entitlement Status – Staff is continuing to work with City of Lompoc staff to develop an agreement whereby the City would give up its Entitlement status and combined its population with the County. No Federal Action required at this time.
2. TEA-21 Project Funding – 6 Yr. Appropriations Bill passed last year. As passed, the bill includes projects totaling \$6 million for the County of Santa Barbara. These project funds are at risk as a result of the ongoing Federal Budget review and may be shifted to support ongoing needs resulting from Katrina.
3. CARA (Conservation and Reinvestment Act)/CIAP (Coastal Impact Assistance Program) – Successfully lobbied to amend distribution formula to benefit impacted jurisdictions. No action required at this time.

4. BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) – BRAC concluded. No action required at this time.

**Federal Issues of Statewide Importance to Counties and CSAC**

It is important to note that CSAC will adopt a slate of issues which they will pursue on behalf of all California Counties. Following is a list of issues to be considered by CSAC. Staff will continue to work with CSAC and NaCO on these statewide issues of concern.

- Tribal Authority in Relation to Gaming
- State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)
- Reauthorization of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Medicaid
- Social Security Reform
- Remote Sales Tax
- Homeland Security
- Child Support Enforcement
- Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT)
- Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization
- Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG)
- Clean Water Act Income Restrictions
- Funding for Election Reform
- Title IV-E (Maintain County Flexibility in use of IV-E Funds)
- Reauthorization of Forest Receipts Program
- Implementation of the Federal Government Roadless Rule
- Monitor potential reductions to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

**Mandates and Service Levels:**

The Legislative Program is not mandated. However, each of the areas identified for advocacy or reporting is directly related to one or more of the County's strategic goals.