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**Federal Legislative Advocacy Activities Report**

For the majority of September, Congress was in recess. Members are scheduled to return to Washington on November 13th for the lame-duck session. When Congress reconvenes on November 13th, lawmakers will have approximately 20 legislative days left to address priorities including the automatic federal cuts that were agreed to as part of last year's debt ceiling negotiations.

As the deadline for the automatic reductions draw near, negotiations continue on how to avoid the cuts. For the most part, Republicans have opposed any tax increases, while Democrats insist that any plan to stop the Sequester must include revenue increases as well as spending reductions. In an attempt to avoid the fiscal cliff, a select group of lawmakers have been advocating for enacting legislation to replace the Sequester with a mixture of targeted spending reductions, the elimination of redundant programs and revenue increases. The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility, which has been the most popular proposal, calls on Congress to adopt sweeping reforms in discretionary spending, tax reform and social security.

If Congress fails to intervene the cuts are scheduled to begin on January 2, 2013, and would impact domestic spending including the Community Development Block Grant by 8.2%. Another category of domestic spending, called direct spending, would be cut at the reduced rate of 7.6% for programs such as Payments In Lieu of Taxes, Social Service Block Grants and the Public Health Fund.

The County will continue to work with our legislative advocates, the National Association of Counties and other stakeholders to preserve funding of importance to the region.

Committee Hearings

During the month of September our advocates monitored several legislative committee hearings of interest to the County.

- House Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Reviewing VA's Performance and Accountability and Examining the Redesign of the Transition Assistance Program.

The first hearing examined accountability and performance at the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA). The only witness for the hearing was Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary of the VA. The committee praised the VA for its efforts to reduce homelessness by 12% over the last two years.

The second hearing discussed the re-design and expansion of the VA's Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) as mandated by the VOW to Hire Hero's Act of 2011. TAP assists separating service members during transition into civilian life by providing job-search assistance and related services.

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TAP consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Our advocacy firm, Potomac Partners, followed up with the committee regarding the process for becoming a pilot site for TAP training. Congress would like to expand the program and work with local communities on improving the program.

- Senate Environmental and Public Works (EPW) Committee Hearing: Water Resource Development Act

The Senate EPW committee held a hearing to discuss the need for a comprehensive Water Development Resources Act (WRDA) bill. WRDA authorizes water resources projects and policies for navigation, flood control, hydropower, recreation, water supply and emergency management for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. WRDA has been traditionally authorized every two years; however, it has not been enacted into law since 2007. Chairman Boxer along with Ranking Member Inhofe plan to introduce a bill before the end of the year but details have not been released on how the Senate bill will be structured.

In preparation for the bill being introduced in the Senate, our advocates spoke with the Senior House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee staff who indicated there is no interest in the House to introduce a WRDA bill in the lame-duck session. Furthermore, staff indicated that the House is working to develop a framework for WRDA and will include 1) streamlining of environmental permitting and construction process; 2) additional tools for private investment opportunities for projects; and 3) a process for member directed projects.

Consistent with the legislation platform, the County will continue to work with our legislative advocates and other local agencies to advocate for a long-term investment for water resources navigation, flood control and environmental restoration; and 2) proposals or budget actions that prioritize federal funding for counties that have dramatic flood control impacts from unmaintained federal lands.

### Legislation of Interest

During the month of September several bills of interest to the County moved through the legislative process.

- The House passed the Federal Emergency Management Agency Reauthorization (H.R. 2903)

H.R. 2903 would authorize appropriations totaling about \$2.2 billion over the next two years for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The legislation would authorize about \$2.1 billion for salaries and expenses of the agency, including \$37 million to modernize the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS); \$71 million for the Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System; \$32 million for dam safety activities; and \$4 million for emergency management assistance compact grants.

H.R. 2903 has several FEMA reforms including expediting the delivery of disaster relief to State and local governments a new procedure for debris removal assistance and makes fixed estimates the basis for grant amounts. According to a report by the Transportation and Infrastructure

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committee, the traditional method by which FEMA removed debris was fraught with red-tape, which slowed the process and was susceptible to fraud and high costs.

The bill is viewed favorably by the Administration and will not likely be controversial in the Senate. The House is hopeful the Senate will take up the bill during the lame-duck session. The bill is currently awaiting action in the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

- **Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act**

Over the past year the County and our federal advocates have been very engaged on Workforce Investment issues. Unfortunately, it is likely that Congress will not move forward with the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) this year; however, we anticipate that WIA will be a priority in the 113th Congress. As previously reported the House Education and Workforce Committee introduced two competing bills this year. According to our advocates, there is a possibility that the committee will work to reconcile the differences during the lame-duck session before introducing a compromise version early next year.

Consistent with the legislative platform the County will work with our Congressional delegation, association and local stakeholders to support the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act to include: 1) continued local control; 2) greater engagement with local area employers to provide business retention, on-the job training, job placement services and offset business closures through layoff prevention services; continued funding of programs that build a workforce customized to meet local demand and emerging sectors; and 4) career growth and employment advancement opportunities that will meet the local needs.

#### State Criminal Alien Assistance Program

In a victory for counties, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced a one-year delay in their decision to eliminate State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) payments to jurisdictions for the costs of incarcerating inmates whose immigration statuses are unknown. The County will continue to monitor the issue and advocate for legislation that will continue and increase funding for counties to mitigate costs associated with the incarceration of undocumented aliens.