



CWDA

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To: County Welfare Directors Association of California

From: Tom Joseph, Director, CWDA Washington, D.C. Office

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Re: Federal Update

The House and Senate have recessed for their traditional August break and will return to Washington on September 9. Upon their return, they will have fewer than ten legislative days to agree upon a plan to continue funding all federal programs and operations before the new federal fiscal year begins on October 1. And, the House continues to grapple on whether and/or how to advance major bills the Senate adopted over the summer, including immigration reform and a farm bill containing nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Federal Spending Bills

FFY 2014 Spending Measures: As has been the case for many years, Congress will not take final action on the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014 Health and Human Services appropriations before the October 1, 2013 deadline. In fact, there is little likelihood that any of the 12 appropriations measures will be adopted by that time. The Senate Appropriations Committee did act on its Labor-HHS bill (S. 1284) in July, but there has been no movement on the House counterpart. The Senate measure does not contain any funding cuts. As it has in past years, it rejected the Obama administration's proposal to cut the Community Services Block Grant by 50 percent.

The House bill's spending level is nearly 26 percent lower than the Senate measure, making it difficult if not impossible for the two bills to be reconciled. At this point, it is very likely Congress will bundle all twelve FY 2014 appropriations bills in late September into a temporary continuing resolution to extend funding for all programs for some period of time later into the fall.

Sequester for FY 2014?: Before the recess, the House pulled from the floor the FY 2014 bill funding Transportation and HUD programs, because it became clear that the size of the cuts made in that bill to avoid a sequester were too great for the GOP rank and file to accept. As the bill was pulled, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) urged an end to the sequestration mechanism due to the 'unrealistic and ill-conceived' deep cuts.

There have been initial discussions on how to avoid across-the-board cuts in FFY 2014. Those negotiations are likely to extend well into the fall. The percentage cut to programs cannot be calculated yet, given the fluid nature of the appropriations process and the dramatic differences in the House and Senate spending approaches.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Earlier this summer, the House failed to adopt a farm bill containing nutrition programs, including SNAP. The GOP leadership was only able to adopt a bill containing agricultural programs, given the contentious nature of the \$20.5 billion in cuts to SNAP. The vast majority of those cuts would come from only allowing categorical eligibility determinations for families receiving cash assistance from other federal programs, such as CalWORKs.

In theory, the House and Senate could begin a farm bill conference, since the Senate bill does contain agriculture and nutrition programs in its measure. Neither the House or Senate, however, are ready to proceed, given the lack of a House nutrition title. Before the break, the House GOP leadership announced that it is working on a nutrition-only bill that would double the cuts to SNAP, despite the fact that they could not find a path to passing a bill with the smaller cuts. Compared to the Senate bill, a House bill containing \$40 billion in cuts would be ten times greater, making it all but impossible to reconcile the differences between the bills.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Reauthorization

There has been no long-term reauthorization measure introduced in either the House or Senate. Nor has the Obama administration submitted any draft legislation. Accordingly, it is clear that there will not be a full TANF reauthorization bill considered this year. TANF has been receiving short-term extensions since October 2010.

In July, the House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee conducted a three-part series examining low-income programs. The GOP focus tended to be on how federal programs fail. Subcommittee Chairman Dave Reichert (R-WA) stated that the current fragmented system often fails low-income individuals by an insufficient focus on work, a lack of coordination between programs and little information on the effectiveness of many federal human services initiatives.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Reauthorization

During the last week of the summer session, the Senate Health, Education Labor and Pensions Committee adopted a WIA reauthorization bill (S. 1356) by a vote of 18-3. The bill is supported by the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities and many business and labor groups. The Obama administration also signaled its support of the legislation.

Unlike the very partisan House bill which consolidates 35 employment and training programs into a single block grant, the Senate bill maintains existing funding streams. It would also streamline and consolidate some administrative reporting procedures at the state and local level, as well as allow local boards to reduce their size by no longer requiring each and every one stop to be represented on it.

The funding formula within each state would essentially remain unchanged.

CWDA
August 2, 2013
Page 3 of 3

There is no schedule yet for Senate floor action. The House and Senate bills are so different, that it is difficult to predict how they would be reconciled.