



County Welfare Directors Association of California

925 L Street, Suite 350, Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 443-1749

Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

CWDA

Washington, DC Office
Tom Joseph
Waterman & Associates
900 Second Street NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 898-1444
tj@wafed.com

To: County Welfare Directors Association of California

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

Date: June 12, 2012

Re: Federal Update

The House is in recess this week and the Senate is debating the farm bill.

Farm Bill/ SNAP: The Senate has begun what may be three weeks of debate on reauthorizing the farm bill (S. 3240). Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) has introduced an amendment that restores, over 10 years, a \$4.5 billion cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and invests \$500 million in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack program. The proposed SNAP cut would place further restrictions on the "Heat and Eat" program which coordinates SNAP and the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by providing small cash LIHEAP benefits directly to SNAP households. This targeted LIHEAP benefit helps meet LIHEAP's requirement for outreach, simplifies the SNAP shelter deduction calculation, and, by increasing SNAP benefits to more realistic levels, alleviates some of the untenable "heat or eat" choices that households face. Fourteen states take advantage of the option and California plans to implement it next year. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the cut would mean that an estimated 500,000 households a year would lose \$90 per month in SNAP benefits.

CWDA has urged Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein to co-sponsor the Gillibrand amendment. To date, Senator Boxer has co-sponsored it. Senators have introduced over 80 amendments so far, with most of them focused on farming issues. There is, however, an amendment sponsored by Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) to block grant SNAP. That amendment will be defeated. Timing of the CWDA-supported Gillibrand amendment is uncertain. No agreements have been reached on how long amendments will be debated, and there isn't an agreement yet on the order in which amendments will be considered.

Much of the policy debate on the floor will revolve around regional differences in how the reauthorization bill treats different crops grown in various parts of the country. Southern states in particular oppose how the bill would affect rice and peanut growers.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): The Senate Finance Committee held a hearing last week on TANF. Senators focused on the fact that, in many states, TANF caseloads did not increase as much during the recession as would have been expected, and in some states, caseloads actually declined. The other concern expressed by members was that a significant share of the funding under TANF is not clearly identified by states. Furthermore, the Government Accountability Office has found that 71 percent of TANF

funds are now spent on non-cash assistance services. Ranking Minority Member Orin Hatch (R-UT) stated, "TANF as a robust welfare-to-work program has all but diminished and in large part has been replaced by the emergence of TANF as a child welfare program."

No reauthorization bill has been introduced in either the House or the Senate. It is clear that there will not be a full TANF reauthorization this year. What is less clear, however, is whether another short-term bill will contain additional policy changes, such as limiting the types of activities states may use to claim excess maintenance of effort credits.

WIA Reauthorization: The House Education and the Workforce Committee adopted along party lines a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (H.R. 4297). The bill would consolidate 25 federal workforce programs, including the adult, youth and dislocated worker programs, into one Workforce Investment Fund. Earlier in the year, CWDA signed on to a letter opposing the bill, due to the likelihood that youth programs would be short-changed in a massive consolidation. Opposed by the Obama Administration, the measure is unlikely to be accepted by the Senate, which has struggled to craft a bi-partisan bill before it considers proceeding. In all likelihood, Congress will once again fail to reauthorize WIA this year.

FFY 2013 Appropriations: The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee is expected this week to mark up its version of a Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 spending package for discretionary HHS programs. The House has not confirmed a markup schedule. Because the allocations for FFY 2013 HHS spending differs greatly between the Senate and House, it is not expected that there will be an agreement on final funding levels until after the November elections.

Capitol Hill Visits: Immediately after the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) conference, Cathy Senderling-McDonald and I visited with staff to key California members who work on human services issues. Visits were made with staff to Reps. Pete Stark (D-Alameda), Becerra (D-Los Angeles) and Bass (D-Los Angeles). Issues discussed included TANF, SNAP, health reform and child welfare. We also met with a child welfare advocate from the Center for Law and Social Policy with whom CWDA has had a well-established relationship.