



CWDA

County Welfare Directors Association of California

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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

Congress returns to Washington today for what is expected to be a politically charged and historic fall. The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction will hold an organizational meeting this Thursday, followed by its first hearing September 13. It has 11 weeks to try to craft a package of revenues, discretionary program cuts and/or savings in entitlement programs totaling up to \$1.5 trillion over ten years. If a majority of the Committee's 12 members fail to agree on a package, or if the proposal is rejected by the House or Senate or vetoed by the President, then across-the-board cuts would occur in January 2013 to all discretionary programs, including many low-income programs, including IV-B child welfare services, child care and the Community Services Block Grant, to name a few.

President Obama is also expected to address a Joint Session of Congress on Thursday to outline a new jobs package proposal. His address comes on the heels of a dismal jobs report last week showing that no new jobs were created overall in August. Private sector payrolls increased by 17,000 but that was offset entirely by a loss of an additional 20,000 local government jobs. Since February 2010, local government has shed 398,000 jobs.

Republicans have already dismissed the President's yet-to-be released plan, arguing that his Administration has had nearly three years move the economy forward. They contend that the economy is stalled due to excessive federal spending and overreaching regulation.

CWDA is monitoring closely the deficit reduction process and will act when necessary. It joined a number of California stakeholder organizations in sending a letter to Super Committee member Representative Xavier Becerra (D-Los Angeles) requesting a meeting with him and urging him to oppose any further federal cuts to programs serving low-income Californians.

Other Legislative Updates

FFY 2012 Spending Bills: House Republican leadership has announced that it did not plan to bring any of the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2012 spending bills to the floor this month. They stated that their focus would be to spur job growth by reducing federal regulations. The announcement means that Congress will adopt a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) before October to extend all federal funding for some yet-to-be determined length of time. House and Senate leadership from both parties have agreed that there would not be any last-minute brinksmanship to derail the CR.

This Friday, the House Labor-HHS subcommittee is expected to hold a markup of the FFY 2012 spending bill. It is not clear when the measure will be considered by the full committee. The Senate has not scheduled their markup.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Reauthorization: A House Ways and Means hearing on TANF is slated for this Thursday, September 8. CWDA will submit testimony for the record.

The focus of the hearing appears to be how TANF has failed to move beneficiaries into self-sufficiency. In the press release announcing the hearing, House Republicans argued,

TANF is designed to help low-income adults prepare for, find, and stay in jobs instead of spending year after year on welfare...In Fiscal Year 2010, over four in ten TANF families faced no work requirement at all, and less than a third of families facing work requirements actually met them in FFY 2009. With TANF requiring an extension before the end of this year, now is the right time to review the program to ensure that States are taking the necessary steps to help TANF families move up the economic ladder, as the 1996 welfare reform intended.

Slated for reauthorization this year, TANF is expected to be extended through the Continuing Resolution. Neither the House nor the Senate has scheduled a markup, much less drafted legislation reauthorizing TANF.

IV-B/ Child Welfare Services Reauthorization: Before its summer recess, the House introduced a bipartisan bill to reauthorize Title IV-B child welfare services programs (H.R. 2790). The measure would extend both Part I Child Welfare Services, and Part II Promoting Safe and Stable Families. The bill revises the goal of requiring 90 percent of children in care to be visited monthly by their caseworker by requiring that only the total visits in a year equal the amount of visits if the child were visited monthly.

The legislation would also remove the discretionary substance abuse treatment grant provision giving greater weight to applicants addressing methamphetamine.

There is no Senate counterpart yet, although House and Senate staff are meeting informally on the reauthorization.

CWS Waivers: Separate bipartisan House and Senate bills have been introduced to amend and renew federal child welfare waiver authority (H.R. 1194; S. 1013). The House bill passed without amendment in May but there has been no action on the Senate measure. The legislation restores the ability of HHS to grant time-limited waivers.

At the request of staff to Senators Boxer and Feinstein, CWDA staff participated in an August conference call with Alameda and Los Angeles Counties, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and Democratic and Republican staff to the Senate Finance Committee. The purpose of the call was to clarify the intent of the Senate bill to ensure that the potentially cumbersome requirements under S. 1013 do not affect the existing California waiver nor any renewal of it. Senate staff assured those on the call that it does not affect the waiver and were open to thoughts that CDSS may have via a letter to make that intent even more clear.