

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

137



FROM: Executive Office

SUBMITTAL DATE:
January 27, 2015

SUBJECT: 2015 Federal Legislative Platform

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the 2015 Federal Legislative Platform and direct the Executive Office and the county's Washington D.C. based representatives to advance the legislative proposals contained herein. All districts, [\$0]

BACKGROUND:

Summary

Each year, the Board of Supervisors adopts a Federal Legislative Platform to guide the legislative advocacy efforts at the federal level. The Executive Office working in conjunction with Board members, department heads, state and regional advocates, developed the Federal Platform to address a variety of crucial issues facing the county.

Alex Gann

Alex Gann
Deputy County Executive Officer

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost:	POLICY/CONSENT (per Exec. Office)
COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NET COUNTY COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	

SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A

Budget Adjustment: N/A
For Fiscal Year: 13/14-14/15

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

BY: *George A. Johnson*
George A. Johnson

County Executive Office Signature

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Ashley, seconded by Supervisor Benoit and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Jeffries, Tavaglione, Benoit and Ashley
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: February 10, 2015
xc: E.O.

KeCIA Harper-Ihem
Clerk of the Board
By: *KeCIA Harper-Ihem*
Deputy

Prev. Agn. Ref.:

District: All

Agenda Number:

3-33

Departmental Concurrence

- A-30
- Positions Added
- 4/5 Vote
- Change Order

BACKGROUND:

Summary (continued)

Previously approved Board positions from earlier federal platforms are still in effect. The 2015 platform includes new federal policy items and key selected policy items of continuing importance. Due to the dynamic nature of the legislative process, the Board will consider additional federal legislative issues of concern throughout the year as the need arises.

Based on the principles of fiscal stability, preservation of local control, efficient service delivery/operations, and the promotion of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors provide specific direction and overall policy guidance by adopting an annual platform for each legislative session in accordance with Board Policy A-27.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

The action by the Board will not impact businesses or residents.

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Additional Fiscal Information

N/A

Contract History and Price Reasonableness

N/A

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY

2015

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Marion Ashley, Chairman
Fifth District

Kevin Jeffries
First District

John Tavaglione
Second District

John J. Benoit
Fourth District

Vacant
Third District

Jay E. Orr
County Executive Officer

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Executive Office prepared this document with assistance from the Board members, department heads, federal advocates and regional stakeholders. Previously approved Board positions from earlier Federal Platforms are still in effect. The 2015 platform includes: key federal legislative priorities, new existing policy items, selected policy items of continuing importance, and finally the CSAC federal priorities are presented for Board approval. Due to the dynamic nature of the legislative process, additional federal legislative issues of concern to the county will be brought forward to the Board for appropriate action throughout the year as the need arises.

Based on the principles of fiscal stability, preservation of local control, efficient service delivery and operations and the promotion of inter-agency cooperation, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors provide specific direction and overall policy guidance by adopting an annual platform for each legislative session in accordance with Board Policy A-27.



New Federal Legislative Policy Items

Federal Transportation Authorization

Issue: MAP-21 is due to expire and reauthorization is necessary to promote a number of key transportation priorities as part of the ongoing highway and transit reauthorization process.

Action: Support an extension to or reauthorization of MAP-21.

Background: MAP-21 expires in 2015, so it necessary to extend or provide a long-term reauthorization. The ability to extend MAP-21 programs – either again in the short-term or with passage of a multi-year bill – will largely depend upon finding the resources necessary to bolster the Highway Trust Fund, which is projected to have a negative balance in May 2015. There are a multitude of ideas on how to pay for surface transportation programs, but no consensus around any of them.

Increased Access for CVSOs to VA information systems

Issue: Support legislation that would provide increased access for County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) to VA information systems (i.e. VBMS, VACOLS, SHARE, MAPD, VIRTUAL VA, etc.) for use in developing and monitoring claims submitted on behalf of veterans.

Background: County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) are local government agencies responsible for assisting veterans and their dependents and survivors in obtaining benefits to which they may be entitled. As such CVSOs need maximum possible access, regardless of VA Power-of-Attorney (POA), to VA client and claims databases. Enhancing this access will result in better, timelier, service to claimants and reduce the workload in VA call centers.

Office on Aging

Issue: Older Americans Act Reauthorization and Appropriations

Action: Support Reauthorization and Funding of the Older Americans Act and Administration on Aging (AoA)

Background: Since 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has gained recognition as a unique and highly regarded statute that has stimulated the development of a comprehensive and coordinated service system. This system has contributed greatly to enhancing the lives of older individuals, family caregivers, and persons with disabilities. Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), established under OAA in 1973, receive federal, state, and local funds to contract with local organizations for service to seniors. There are 618 national AAA's, with 33 AAA's designated by the California Department of Aging as the local Planning Services Agencies. Riverside County Office on Aging was designated on June 18, 1974, by the Board of Supervisors, as a County Department on Aging for Planning and Service Area (PSA) 21. It serves as the official Area Agency on Aging throughout Riverside County, California.

The OAA has been operating under a continuing resolution since 2011 and requires support for its reauthorizing. In March of 2013, the OAA and the older adult programs that the Act funds were cut due to sequestration with Riverside County Office on Aging realizing over \$700,000 in annual federal funding cuts that are utilized for community programming including senior nutrition, assisted transportation, legal and respite services, and other pertinent programs. Older adults and the demand for services are increasing in both numbers and as a percentage of the population at rates unprecedented in our history.

In early 2014, reauthorization of the Older Americans Act experienced much activity on the House side of the Capital, with two reauthorization bills introduced (including S.B. 1562) and a hearing of the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee of jurisdiction in February. Unfortunately, the impasse in the Senate has impacted the House's willingness to take up the discussion. OAA is currently stalled in the Senate, and the House will not act until the Senate does.

The current compromise, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2013 (S.B. 1562), represents a bipartisan, modest, reasonable approach to reauthorizing these programs. The bill also reinforces the critical importance of OAA programs and services developed, coordinated and delivered every day by Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI programs across the country.

With the most recent election results, congressional change may affect legislative priorities important to older Americans. During the interim period of closing the 113th Congress, national aging organizations will be urging and advocating for the finishing of FY 2015 Older Americans Act appropriations bill to include increased spending for OAA programs, and for securing Aging and Disability Resource Center gap funding for this year. If not successful, discussions to reauthorize the Older Americans Act will start over in 2015 with the new 114th Congress, in hope new opportunities will open the support and understanding of the critical role that local Area Agencies on Aging play in protecting the well-being of older Americans.

Health Screening for H-1B Visa Applicants

Issue: There is a lack of health screening for H-1B work visa applicants, and their families, some of which are already in the United States. This presents a potential health risk due to communicable diseases.

Action: Support legislation that requires that individuals entering the U.S. on H-1B visas from countries that are endemic for TB and other diseases of public health significance have health screening by overseas panel physicians. The health screening should be completed by civil surgeons for individuals already in the United States. The cost of the screening should be covered by the sponsoring employer.

Background: It is estimated that immigration reform will increase the number of H-1B work visas from the current 65,000 to approximately 180,000 annually. These individuals come from countries with high prevalence of TB and drug resistant TB. Screening of the applicants and their families for TB and other communicable diseases of public health significance is an important prevention strategy to reduce potential disease transmission and ensure appropriate treatment and follow-up of infected individuals.

Transportation Funding for Complete Streets

Issue: Complete Streets are designed to be used by everyone: cars, buses, bicyclists and walkers. Complete Streets help create better/healthier communities for people to live, play, work and shop. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

Action: Support state and federal funding for Complete Streets which encourages transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.

Background: Often, we do not consider pedestrians or bicyclists when we build our streets making walking or bicycling challenging. Complete streets allow walkers and bicyclists to be active users of roads.

Training, Recruitment and Retention of Public Health Workforce

Issue: Training, Recruitment and Retention of Public Health Workforce

Action: Support legislation that allows for the establishment of a Public Health Workforce Scholarship Program and a Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program.

Background: The ability of the public health system is to prevent, respond to and recover from bioterrorism, infectious disease outbreaks and other health threats depends on the existence of adequate numbers of well-trained public health, environmental health and healthcare professionals. The current public health system has an aging staff nearing retirement with no clear influx of highly skilled and capable employees to fill the void. Within the healthcare workforce there is an increasing need with the Affordable Care Act and the increase in patients into the system.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Funding

Issue: Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization

Action: Support Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization to provide full funding which is adequate to maintain current and anticipated Women Infant & Children (WIC) participation levels and assure adequate Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) funding to maintain clinic costs, education and cost of living increases should the economic recovery take longer than anticipated. Child Nutrition also includes SNAP education for families.

Background: The Inland Empire continues to suffer from the economic recovery in which families utilize these programs to ensure access to healthy and nutritious foods where they live, play and learn. Since fiscal years 2006, more families in Riverside County have turned to WIC. These circumstances have forced WIC to utilize contingency funds to assure that mothers and young children were not turned away. WIC urges Congress and the Administration to carefully monitor WIC participation, food cost inflation and Nutrition Services Administration (NSA). Funding to assure that the budget request responds to economic conditions. Child nutrition and WIC programs strive to combat childhood overweight and obesity and chronic disease prevention and has been part of the President's budget proposals to Eat Healthier, Live Better and end poverty.

Public Health and Medical Emergency Preparedness and Response Funding

Issue: Funding local health jurisdiction planning, preparedness and response to acts of terrorism, disasters, or other public health emergencies.

Action: Support the continuation and/or increase of federal and state funding to offset the local costs associated with planning for and responding to the public health and medical consequences of terrorism, natural disasters and/or other public health emergencies.

Support the removal of restrictions on the utilization of grant funds to fund personnel, including permanent and temporary staff positions and contract personnel.

Support the continued use of grant funds for the infrastructure needed for personnel, including rent, communications equipment and computer support. Continue to allow these costs to be billed as direct charges.

Support the development of funding formulas that consider proximity of jurisdictions to high profile targets and are not based solely on the presence of such targets within jurisdictional boundaries.

Support the reinstatement of categorical Homeland Security grant funding for the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS).

Background: The terrorist activity on and after September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, the October 2007 fires in Southern California, the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Pandemic and the 2014 Ebola response are a few examples of events that have highlighted the impact of terrorism, natural disasters and public health emergencies on local, state and federal medical/health response capabilities.

Changes in federal funding have limited the amount of personnel that can be supported by emergency preparedness and response grants. Although the grants allow for the utilization of contract staff, these staff are often unfamiliar with local policies and procedures, do not necessarily have a vested interest in the community in which they are working, and are often only contracted for a short period of time. In addition, some federal grants include contract staff in personnel caps. Federal grants should not restrict the funding of personnel at the local level; such restrictions severely impair the ability of the local health jurisdiction to develop and support comprehensive activities to combat the evolving threats of terrorism, natural disasters and other public health emergencies.

Increases in state and federal funding are needed to augment local programs to prepare for and respond to all forms of terrorism, natural disasters or other public health

emergencies. Legislation is needed which increases prevention and response capabilities and strengthens the partnerships between state, federal and local agencies to effectively identify, prevent and respond to the medical/health consequences of terrorism, disasters or other public health emergencies. Funding formulas should consider proximity to high profile, high impact targets as nearby jurisdictions to such targets will likely be severely impacted through the provision of mutual aid to the impacted jurisdiction or by the influx of large numbers of people seeking shelter and/or treatment.

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) as a separate funding stream has been eliminated from the Homeland Security suite of grants. Although an allowable project under the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP), the lack of dedicated funding to MMRS has resulted in a decrease in support for the capabilities built by the MMRS program over the past 14 years. MMRS funding was unique in that it supported the integration of the public health and medical response community with the first responder community. Further, MMRS provided support for activities not specifically benchmarked in the CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement or the ASPR Hospital Preparedness Program, such as building an integrated, multi-disciplinary hazmat response and EMS response activities including dispatch triage and decontamination of EMS equipment.

Elections – Vote Counting

Issue: Expedite vote counting for future elections which is necessary due to state decertification of electronic voting system.

Action: Pursue state and federal funding to purchase a certified voting system.

Background: Riverside County was the pioneer and gained national recognition when it transitioned to a fast and accurate electronic voting system that was federally and state certified. The California Secretary of State's August 3, 2007, decision to decertify electronic voting forced Riverside County to transition to a cumbersome paper ballot system that was never intended to be used as a principal voting system at polling places. Currently, only four voting systems are certified for use in California, and those systems have not been upgraded since the 2007 decertification order by the state. Options for expediting election night ballot counting will continue to be a challenge for Riverside County until a new voting system is approved by the Secretary of State and funds are secured for the purchase of a new voting system.

Energy Division

Issue: Federal – Local Government revenue sharing: Energy and Mineral extraction on federal lands.

Action: Riverside County supports federal legislation enabling federal agencies to negotiate revenue sharing agreements with local governments for funds generated on federal lands as a result of energy production and/or mineral extraction.

Background: Riverside County supports the Salton Sea Authority's board-adopted Guiding Principles for Legislative Action which call for local leadership to assert defense of local resources from predation by entities that would extract the resources without compensation to the impacted communities.

Specifically, the principles call for opposition to financial arrangements that enable state/federal or other entities outside the region to extract – without remuneration to locals and the Salton Sea restoration effort – revenues from the local area derived from local resources on public lands overseen by publicly agencies.

As a corollary, revenue sharing agreements that are mutually acceptable to all concerned warrant support, along with legislation that will enable such arrangements.

Further, the federal government shares an interest in this approach in that the domestic supply chain of certain rare earth metals has collapsed, causing undue dependence upon foreign sources for these metals of strategic significance to the tech economy and military defense. Cooperative ventures between the federal government and mineral rich counties like Riverside County – especially in the Salton Sea region where one of the world's largest and purest deposits of lithium has been discovered – hold promise for equitable arrangements that address federal and local priorities with new resources.

Workforce Investment Board & Workforce Development

Issue: Passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will present challenges in implementation and service provision to the tens of thousands of businesses and job seekers who utilize workforce services in Riverside County, California. Imminent shifts in governing, administrative and programmatic infrastructure require a planned and methodical implementation to ensure the least negative impact to our customers.

Action:

Governance

- Provide incentives for working collaboratively across workforce areas. For the most part, regional lines should be drawn based on existing MSAs and/or commuter patterns; provide incentives for regionalization through the governors set aside funds (e.g., regional initiatives may have access to funds that other boards do not) rather than consolidating existing boards.
- Maintain and fund an effective national workforce development system which addresses the workforce needs of job seekers including youth, incumbent workers, and employers; aligns the appropriate resources; and is designed, governed, and implemented by a public-private partnership made up of local elected officials and business leaders.

Structure

- Under WIOA, § 106 (b) Recommend that the Governor approve local area designation requests from areas formerly designated under WIA to ensure consistency of infrastructure and services.
- Under WIOA, § 107 (g) Recommend that the Governor and CLEO (Chief Local Elected Official) agree to designate or certify as One-Stop Operator the currently designated operator under WIA to ensure consistency of infrastructure and services.

Funds & Leveraged Resources

- Redirect available funds to build economic and workforce capacity in the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino counties).
- Substantially increase local transit service for workers.

Accountability Measures

- Under WIOA, § 116 (d) Recommend that Performance Reporting as it relates to contents of the Eligible Training Providers Report (ETPL) be developed with all stakeholders involved to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Establish a Performance Measurement System that takes into account the challenges associated with serving the most difficult to serve populations and other local environmental factors.

Eligibility

- Streamline the eligibility determination process and align eligibility with other programs that would allow automatic eligibility for WIA enrollment if an individual had already been determined eligible for other means tested programs such as the school lunch program.
- With additional resources, create a new category of eligibility for Transitional Youth. This category of youth, ages 22 to 24, should receive service offerings at appropriate levels of intensity and support to assist them as they transition from being youth to becoming young adults. The service mix required for this age group is a combination of supports found in the current youth system while focusing on more mature methods of job search assistance and occupational skills development.

Innovation & Technology

- Under WIOA, § 107 (d)(7) Recommend the development of strategies to maximize accessibility and effectiveness of local system technology through universal intake mechanisms.
- Enhance Congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in the local area to close the digital divide and improve digital literacy.

Background: The Riverside County Workforce Investment Board is one of 600 private-sector led Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in the Country. WIBs are transforming the nation's workforce system to be responsive to the demands of a global economy. Through strong strategic partnerships with private-sector businesses, local government, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education and K-12 educations, WIBs remain in a prime position to serve as the pipeline for a skilled labor force necessary for economic recovery and long-term growth.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was authorized in 1998. Over the past 11 years the public workforce system has long awaited reauthorization that would address the evolving workforce and economic needs as well as the limitations in WIA with respect to training, funding, and service delivery design. The Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act WIOA) replaces WIA and will be in effect for the next five years (2015-2020). WIOA intends to provide workforce investment activities, through statewide and local systems that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase attainment of recognized credentials by participants, and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet the skill requirements of employers, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation.

Housing

Issue: Support S.65, the “Moving to Work Charter Program Act of 2015,” to add 250 additional public housing agencies in fiscal year 2015 in order to improve the effectiveness of Federal housing assistance, and for other purposes.

Action: Support S. 65, the “Moving to Work Charter Program Act of 2015,” to expand and add 250 agencies to MTW and to provide the Housing Authority of the County of Riverside (HACR) the opportunity to enter into a charter contract with the Secretary beginning in fiscal year 2015 as one of the 250 expanded MTW agencies.

Background: MTW designation would allow public housing agencies to:

1. Flexibly design and implement various approaches for providing and administering housing assistance that achieves greater cost effectiveness in using Federal housing assistance to address local housing needs for low-income families;
2. Reduce administrative burdens;
3. Give incentives to assisted families to work and become economically self-sufficient;
4. Increase housing choices for low-income families; and,
5. Enhance the ability of low-income elderly residents and persons with disabilities to live independently.

The Housing Authority of the County of Riverside (CA027) has earned the highest HUD designation for the last consecutive 12 years via a “High” performer rating under the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) for its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The agency and its dedicated team of professionals have demonstrated their ability to successfully administer a large HCV program consisting of 8988 HUD-authorized subsidies. Over \$66,000,000 in annual HUD funding was fully utilized in CY 2014 to assist extremely-low and very-low income residents of Riverside County. A MTW designation would allow current program participants to experience a higher focus on self-sufficiency while at the same time reduce the administrative burden to administer the program. A higher focus and incentive towards self-sufficiency would facilitate a higher number of turnover vouchers, thus assisting more eligible households from the waiting list sooner than is currently possible.

The HCV waiting list presently has over 13,000 families waiting for assistance. For the past 5 years the HCV waiting list has been closed to all but veterans and a narrow population of other vulnerable families. It is due to re-open to everyone on July 1, 2015, and will remain open for the next fiscal year. The HACR observes the State’s waiting list priority given to veterans and assists qualified veteran households from the waiting

list first, in each local preference tier, before all others. Thousands of Riverside County residents are expected to register when the waiting list re-opens and the demand for affordable housing vouchers via the HCV program will be strongly evidenced by a large waiting list.

Lastly, the adjacent jurisdiction to the HACR is the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino (HACSB). HACSB has held a MTW designation for many years and the HACR shares a Fair Market Rent (FMR) metropolitan area with San Bernardino. Over the past 4 years, over 100 households have exercised HCV portability from San Bernardino to Riverside, many of whom did so in order to avoid HACSB MTW initiatives such as engaging in employment which would lead to self-sufficiency. With a MTW designation, it would allow the HACR to further support the self-sufficiency initiative for the metropolitan area, as well as the other initiatives set forth in the 2015 Act.

The Riverside County Housing Authority is ready and welcoming of a MTW designation so that additional extremely-low and very-low income residents on the waiting list can be assisted with HCV subsidies. Further, a MTW designation for Riverside will allow the agency to offer an expanded, more flexible, affordable housing program to the families it serves.

Housing

Issue: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Operating Fund for the Public Housing Program has continued to be appropriated at very low levels that are not sufficient to run operations at optimal efficiency. For Calendar Year 2014, the final proration amount is 88.79%.

Action: Urge Congress to restore the appropriation level to 100% for the Public Housing Program.

Background: The Riverside County EDA's Housing Authority serves low income families and individuals that reside in its Public Housing units located throughout the County. The ongoing Operating Fund for Public Housing is dangerously low. The underfunding may result in the physical deterioration of the sites due to the lack of sources for preventive maintenance, which will in turn make it difficult to attract renters and stabilize occupancy levels.

Housing

Issue: The Rental Assistance Demonstration's (RAD) initial statutory level established a cap of 60,000 public housing and Moderate Rehabilitation housing units that could be converted to a Section 8 project-based program. As of August 2014 the wait list numbered 118,000 units. The cap increase of 180,000 units that HUD recommended failed to be included in the continuing resolution that was passed in September.

Action: Urge Congress to lift the RAD cap in the next spending legislation to allow more Public Housing Authorities to participate in the program.

Background: The RAD program was formed by HUD as a rental housing preservation strategy that offers significant relief from the current unstable federal funding levels. It is designed to assist in safeguarding and increasing affordable housing that would serve as many low income households as possible. Under this stable Section 8 funding platform, more resources would be available to improve living conditions of residents; and a provision for a choice-mobility option for residents after a one-year tenancy in the project-based units would be available. This would also result in an increase in Section 8 lease-up rates and allow other people in the Public Housing waiting list to experience housing assistance.

Housing

Issue: Congress has cut funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Act Program by nearly 50% over the course of two fiscal years. In June, 2014 Congress passed H.R. 4745 which proposed to cut HOME funds by another 30%.

Action: Urge Congress to refrain from further HOME cuts and fully fund the HOME Investment Partnerships Act Program.

Background: Riverside County EDA/Housing Authority strongly urges Congress to fully fund the HOME Program. The County of Riverside is the fourth most populated county in the State, consisting of urbanized neighborhoods, suburban cities, and rural communities. Since 1994, the County of Riverside has utilized HOME funds for the construction, acquisition, and/or rehabilitation of more than 4,241 units and provided down payment assistance to 663 First Time Home Buyers. On June 10, 2014, Congress passed HR 4745 which proposes to cut HOME funds by another 30%. Currently, HOME funds are one of the few funding sources allocated to the local level that allow for the preservation and new construction of affordable housing. A further reduction in HOME funds will require that local agencies discontinue either their First Time Homebuyers or new-construction/rehabilitation programs.

Housing

Issue: The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit rates are currently determined by a formula that is tied to the federal borrowing rates which consistently change. The lower the federal borrowing rates fall, the lower the housing credit rate becomes which reduces the equity available for individual affordable housing developments.

Action: Urge Congress to make the minimum housing credit rates permanent.

Background: Currently the affordable housing rates are established at a minimum 9% for new construction and substantial rehabilitation and 4% for acquisition and moderate rehabilitation. Due to the fact that federal have dropped to historic lows, there is now 15 to 20 percent less housing credit equity available for any given project. Without sufficient equity many projects are impossible to finance. Most of the projects are underwritten with other funding sources; however in the recent years these sources have experienced a significant cut in funding. Without the flexibility to provide increased housing credit equity many projects will be impossible to finance.

Economic Development

Issue: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides both loan and grant programs supporting projects in rural communities. However, the funding is primarily in the form of loan programs rather than grant funding.

Action: Support expansion of USDA rural development grant programs for infrastructure improvements, business development, community facilities, housing, and broadband services.

Background: USDA Rural Development forges partnerships with rural communities, funding projects that bring housing, community facilities, business guarantees, utilities and other services to rural America. USDA provides technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperatives to create quality jobs in rural areas.

Community Development Block Grant

Issues: Stable annual appropriations for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to allow grantees to effectively plan and utilize funding allocations

Action: Support proposed FY 2015 CDBG funding and continuing resolutions in both the Senate and House.

Background: Stable Funding: Severe cuts to the CDBG program over the last 5 years continues to leave the program at its lowest funding level since it beginning, when adjusted for inflation. It is important that the funding for CDBG remain stable to allow the grantees and subrecipients around the County to appropriately and effectively plan and utilize this important resource.

Community Development Block Grant

Issues: Regulatory reform of the CDBG program to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness

Action: Support regulatory reform of the CDBG Entitlement Program to modify thresholds for grantee entitlement status to ensure long-term viability.

Background: Entitlement Reform: The CDBG regulations must be modified to change the “formula” or thresholds for grantees to attain “entitlement” status. In 1984 there were 795 grantees dividing up a \$3.486 billion CDBG allocation. For FY 2014, there are more than 1250 dividing up \$3.03 billion. The effectiveness and viability of the CDBG program is at risk and cannot be sustained. Authorize County executives to advocate for legislation in the best interest of the County’s CDBG program.

Community Development Block Grant

Issues: Supplemental CDBG appropriations to encourage and expand use of CDBG for economic development activities.

Action: Support supplemental CDBG appropriations for economic development activities and modify public benefit/job creation requirements and other regulatory requirements.

Background: Economic Development: Encourage special supplemental appropriations of CDBG funds aimed at sustainable, community-based economic development activities – similar to the 2009/2010 Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) program. The funding would be used to target job creating economic development activities in areas with higher percentages of poverty, unemployment, and lower-income households. To encourage grantee participation, CDBG regulations pertaining to job creation (CDBG \$ per job), public benefit, and other performance issues need to be amended.



Previous Federal Policy Positions

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Issue: Riverside County is one of the most diverse regions within the United States, and that diversity keeps us strong and vibrant. The immigration system is broken and has created a situation where up to 11 million undocumented immigrants are living in the shadows.

Action: Support the passage of comprehensive immigration reform that includes: continued enhancement of border security/national defense, a tough but fair pathway to citizenship, a guest worker program for agricultural workers and other subsistence-wage workers, a special provision to ensure minor children are treated separately, a registration program with the government to combat visa overstays, and an improved process for admitting future workers to serve our nation's workforce needs while simultaneously protecting all workers.

Background: Riverside County encompasses persons from over 120 countries and a foreign-born population comprising over 21.8 percent of the local population. The diversity of both the County and the United States keeps us strong and vibrant, and in an increasingly interconnected world, the diversity of our nation is a powerful advantage in the global competition.

Export-Import Bank of the United States

Issue: Expansion of Service of the Export-Import Bank of the United States in the County of Riverside in 2014.

Action: Support, advocate, and promote.

Background: The Export-Import Bank of the United States provides export financing assistance to manufactures and other exporters in Riverside County via a partnership agreement executed by the Assistant County Executive Officer/EDA, with the approval of the Board of Supervisors. The County Foreign Trade Commissioner/EDA serves as the county representative to the Ex-IM Bank in Washington, D.C. and to the business community. With the recent Brookings Institute study indicating Riverside County ranking 24 in the nation in exports, Ex-Im Bank should consider funding a full-time position in Riverside County to better serve our business community. Almost 50 county businesses rely on Ex-Im Bank services to assist in capitalizing exports. Advocating for the addition of a part-time staff position for the Ex-Im Bank will be a benefit to the county and its businesses and expands and improves services, which must now be offered from Newport Beach and/or San Diego. Authorize county staff within the economic development agency to advocate for this staffing increase in the house and senate along within the administration whenever deemed in the best interest of the county.

Base Realignment and Closure

Issue: Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

Action: Oppose

Background: Base realignment and closure is a possibility in 2014. EDA opposes further BRAC action in the county. March Air Reserve Base (MARB), Norco Naval Surface Warfare Center, and National Guard Armories could be targeted. Staff requests authorization to aggressively oppose BRAC.

Military Appropriations

Issue: Appropriations for area military installation, bases, organization.

Action: Support defense appropriation requested by guard and reserve, active forces, and organization located within the County of Riverside.

Background: DoD and the administration are reducing appropriations for armed forces across the board. Our military installations contribute billions to our local economy and employ 7,000 military and civilian personnel. Authorize staff to advocate for the appropriations, equipment, personnel, and federal and state missions in support of the Guard and Reserve Forces.

Support of Agriculture

Agriculture is the County's fourth largest business sector and provides \$4 billion in economic impact for the county. Twelve hundred (1200) farming operations with thousands of direct jobs are created in the county by farming and the agricultural industry. Supporting this industry is vital to the economic interests of the county.

Support legislation and advocate to protecting and promoting farming and agriculture within the County of Riverside. This also renews the county support for the reauthorization and passage of a new Farming Bill in Washington, D.C.

Authorizes the County Commission of Foreign Trade to continue advocacy in Washington D.C. and Sacramento for crafting and passage of legislation that benefits the farmer and the agricultural industry in exporting products.

VA Disability Claims Backlog

Issue: VA Disability Claims Backlog Partnership

Action: Support legislative, regulatory or policy changes that would create a federal/state/local government partnership to reduce the VA veteran's claims backlog and expand outreach services to veterans.

Background: VA has expressed the belief that one important way to reduce the unacceptable claims backlog is the initial submission of as complete as is possible claims packages. Individual claimants are unfamiliar with the requirements of the VA claims system. It is, therefore necessary to have competent, trained intermediaries, such as County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO), participate in the preparation and submission of claims. Many CVSOs do not have the resources to do the community outreach that would enable them to reach the maximum possible number of benefit claimants. Federal/state/local partnerships will enable State and County veterans service programs to reach and assist more claimants thus helping to reduce the chronic VA claims backlog.

VA Means Test

Issue: Means Test for VA Medical Care

Action: Support legislation that would eliminate the Means Test for veterans to qualify for VA medical care.

Background: The VA currently uses Means Tests (income limits) as one of the factors in determining a veteran's eligibility for VA medical care. These income limitations have excluded many veterans, who would otherwise qualify for enrollment, from obtaining their primary healthcare through the VA. In light of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, we believe all veterans have earned the right and should be able to enroll and obtain their healthcare through the VA if they so choose.

Provide Timely and Safe Home Placements for Foster Children

Issue: Safety of children placed in foster care

Action: Support legislation to provide authority to social services agencies with child welfare responsibilities to access National Crime Information databases, including access to the FBI's national criminal information databases.

Background: One of child welfare agencies overriding goals is to provide foster children with safe and stable home environments as quickly as possible. Child welfare agencies strive to ensure the placement of the child in a safe and stable home

environment and take many precautions to avoid unsafe placements, including avoiding the placement of children in homes with persons with criminal backgrounds.

Currently, child welfare agencies cannot access national crime information databases for use in foster care placements. Children need stability. Children need to be safe. Allowing access to these databases would help provide for an accurate and timely assessment of a safe home environment

340B Drug Pricing Program

The 340B program enables RCRMC to provide drugs to its patients at a reasonable price. The current rules only allow discounts on outpatient drugs. Expanding the program to provide discounted drugs to patients in the inpatient setting will enhance the ability of safety net providers, like RCRMC, to ensure access to care for vulnerable patients. The 340B program provides a vital public service and efforts to eliminate it should be opposed.



Continuing Federal Policy Positions

Continuing Federal Policy Positions

Re-Entry and Anti-Recidivism Programs:

Support measures that will increase funding for re-entry and anti-recidivism programs to provide a second chance at the local level.

Alternative Energy:

Support incentives and programs that encourage alternative energy, including wind power and solar.

Santa Ana River Parkway:

Support federal funding for this tri-county parkway, including support of the Army Corps of Engineer's request for funds for use at Prado Dam.

Unfunded Mandates:

Support measures that ease the burden of federal regulations and mandates on local governments by:

- Requiring adequate federal funds for new mandates arising from federal law, regulation, or policy; and,
- Reimburse local governments for the costs of complying with existing federal mandates.

Public Safety Funding:

Support measures that provide funding opportunities for local public safety efforts, including law enforcement, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, violence against women, domestic terrorism, communications interoperability, and drug court activities.

Public Health Funding:

Support measures that continue or increase critical federal funding for local public health services, including Medicaid/Medicare, DSH, Ryan White, SAMHSA, and Preventative Health funding.

Social Services Funding:

Support measures that continue or increase critical federal funding for local social services, including Child Welfare Services programs, the Social Services Block Grant, the Community Services Block Grant and funding under the Older Americans Act.

Maternal and Child Health Care:

Support funding for Maternal and Child Health Block Grants and legislation to revise the distribution formula for MCH funds to provide a more equitable distribution of funding for jurisdictions that have experienced population growth.

Election Reform:

Support measures that provide support and funding for upgrading and maintaining local voting systems.

Endangered Species Act (ESA):

Support measures consistent with the Board's policy to amend and reauthorize the ESA, including a more systemic approach to implementation of the Act.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT):

Support measures that increase PILT to the amount authorized by the Act in 1994.

Housing, Homeless, and Community Development Funding:

Support measures that address the housing and homeless needs in the county, and increase and fully fund the CDBG program.

Agricultural Pests:

Support measures to provide funding to address agricultural pest issues in the county.

Mental Health:

Support measures that provide funding for mentally ill offenders and other mental health programs.

Habitat Conservation:

Support measures that support and fund:

- 1) Habitat conservation and related activities,
- 2) Transportation and communication corridors to relieve congestion; and,
- 3) Planning efforts to establish future land use and housing needs.

Temporary Assistant to Needy Families (TANF):

Support measures that will reauthorize and improve the TANF program.

Riverside County Regional Medical Center:

Support legislation that would provide funding for capital improvement projects to improve Riverside County Regional Medical Center's ability to serve as the region's first responder for health-related incidents, and oppose any attempts to reduce Medicaid payments to public hospitals.

Reimbursement Rates for Uninsured Persons Utilizing Hospitals:

Support state efforts to gain additional federal funding to both reduce losses to hospitals under the Medicaid program, and to provide reimbursement for uninsured patients seen by hospitals.

Empowerment Zones:

Support measures that establish a formal funding mechanism and ensure long-term funding for Empowerment Zones.

Foreign Trade Zones:

Support Federal legislation that will allow existing Foreign Trade Zones to expand and support legislation that will allow for the creation of new Foreign Trade Zones.



2014 Federal Advocacy Outcomes

2014 Federal Advocacy Outcomes

The 113th Congress second session ended with little progress towards major policy areas that were under consideration. Some successes include final negotiations on a Farm Bill and completion of the FY 2014 appropriation process, largely a result of agreements made late in 2013 with the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

The 2013 Budget Act was intended to simplify future budgets, but Congress could not come to an agreement until the new session began. The House and Senate negotiated on a proposal and came to an agreement for final FY 2015 funding levels for most federal programs and agencies. The Consolidated and Further Continuing Resolution was signed by the president on December 16, 2014. Funding levels for many of the programs are very similar to the prior year.

Congress left several unfinished tasks on the table including comprehensive immigration reform, reauthorization of national surface transportation programs and national freight network trust fund to name just a few. There were several legislative actions of significance to your Board and the County's mandated responsibilities that were completed in 2014. These include:

- Approval of the *Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skill (Skills Act)*, to reauthorize and update the Workforce Investment Act;
- Enactment of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), including revision of the Army Corps of Engineers' vegetation management policy, and provisions to streamline environmental permitting;
- Passage of the 2014 *Farm Bill*, including reauthorization of County Pest Detection programs and provisions relevant to local specialty crops;
- A one-year extension of funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools Programs;
- Passage of stopgap legislation averting drastic cuts in Medicare physician reimbursement rates under the Sustainable Growth Rate;
- Approval of the *Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act* to delay implementation of increased flood insurance premiums mandated by the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act until FEMA completes and affordability study and Congress is able to act on its recommendations;
- Reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act, for the first time in seventeen years, and,

- Reauthorization through 2019 of the Debbie Smith Act, which provides grants to conduct DNA analyses of backlogged DNA samples.

Funding for specific projects in general and Riverside County proposals and projects in particular was affected by the continuation of the moratorium on earmarks, as well as the uncertainty of Federal funding streams due to the disruptions in both the FY 2014 and FY 2015 appropriations processes. Nevertheless, the County was awarded several Federal grants and reimbursements, including:

- \$7.59 million in FY 2014 Ryan White Part A funding for the joint Riverside – San Bernardino Transitional Grant Area;
- \$7.15 million in competitive Continuum of Care (CoC) awards for ongoing projects in the county serving the homeless
- \$7.05 million through HUD’s Community Development Block Grant program and \$1.77 million under the HOME program;
- \$5.5 million to fund water, sewer, and drainage systems for the Los Vinedos/San Critobal Migrant Farmworker Housing Project in Mecca;
- \$3.33 million under the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program;
- \$1.5 million for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), \$893,000 for the Coachella Valley Multiple Species HCP, and, \$675,345 for the Upper Santa Ana River HCP under the Section 6 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund;
- \$1 million for land acquisition for the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument;
- \$990,051 in one-year budget authority and 125 vouchers under the HUD-VA Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing Program;
- \$754,761 under the State Criminal Aliens Assistance Program (SCAAP);
- \$583,301 in Emergency Solutions Grant funding to address homelessness;
- \$578,730 under HUD’s Capital Fund grants for the construction, repair, renovation, or modernization of public housing units;
- \$474,873 for service coordinators under HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program;
- \$300,000 for Salton Sea restoration through the Bureau of Reclamation; and;
- \$188,000 under the FY 2014 Edward Byrne Memorial Fund Justice Assistance Grant (JAG).



CSAC 2015 FEDERAL ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

CSAC staff, in consultation with Waterman and Associates, developed the following list of federal issues of significance to California's counties. These issues will represent the association's top lobbying priorities for 2015, with CSAC staff and Waterman and Associates working together to identify other emerging topics that may necessitate action throughout the year.

MAP-21 Reauthorization. CSAC will continue to promote a number of key transportation priorities as part of the ongoing highway and transit reauthorization process. Among other issues, the association strongly supports a dedicated federal funding stream for local bridges, both on- and off-system. Additionally, CSAC is seeking opportunities to further streamline the regulatory and project delivery processes; promote programs that increase safety on the existing transportation system; and, advocate for initiatives that protect previous and future investments via system maintenance and preservation.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. CSAC will continue to serve as a lead advocate in efforts to protect - as well as enhance - the SCAAP program, which is a key source of federal funding for a significant number of California's counties. CSAC will fight to eliminate statutory language that authorizes the U.S. Department of Justice to transfer up to 10 percent of SCAAP funding to other justice accounts.

CSAC also will continue to advocate for a long-term reauthorization of SCAAP and will continue to seek several key programmatic changes to the program. Such changes could come about as part of an immigration-reform effort.

Native American Affairs/Fee-to-Trust Reform. CSAC will continue to lead local government opposition to any legislative effort that would overturn the Supreme Court's *Carcieri v. Salazar* decision absent concomitant reforms in the Indian fee-to-trust process; likewise, the association will continue to promote its comprehensive legislative reform proposal. CSAC will continue to oppose administrative changes to the federal acknowledgment process that would diminish the role of local governments and other interested parties.

Payments-in-lieu-of-Taxes. CSAC will continue to advocate for a long-term reauthorization of mandatory entitlement funding for the PILT program. In the absence of a long-term renewal, CSAC will support full funding for PILT via the appropriations process. Mandatory funding for PILT expired in fiscal year 2014, and final payments were distributed to counties in June.

Secure Rural Schools Act Reauthorization. CSAC will maintain efforts aimed at securing a multi-year reauthorization of the SRS program. Absent a long-term program renewal, CSAC supports a short-term extension of the Act. The program expired at the end of fiscal year 2013, and final payments were distributed to eligible counties in April of 2014.

Property Assessed Clean Energy Program. CSAC supports legislative and administrative remedies that would help expand residential PACE programs. The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) issued a directive in 2010 that effectively shut down PACE programs in California and across the country. Bipartisan legislation that would prevent FHFA from adopting policies that contravene established state and local PACE laws remains on the table.

Water Resources. CSAC will monitor legislative proposals to ensure consistency with the association's comprehensive policy direction on water. Given the ongoing drought, various interests continue to pressure California's congressional delegation and the Obama administration to address the state's chronic water shortage. A range of proposals are being discussed that would address water transfers, endangered species laws, water quality, and California Bay-Delta protections, to name a few.

CSAC will continue to promote legislation that would provide a *Clean Water Act* Section 404 permitting exemption for maintenance removal of sediment, debris, and vegetation from local flood control channels and basins.

CSAC also will continue to monitor and support congressional efforts to block EPA's administrative actions aimed at expanding regulatory authority over certain bodies of water. The EPA's proposed "Waters of the U.S." regulation remains highly controversial and is opposed by a variety of stakeholders, including state and local governments, agricultural interests, and the Small Business Administration.

Remote Sales Tax Legislation. CSAC will continue to advocate for federal legislation - the *Marketplace Fairness Act* - that would authorize state and local governments to require tax collection and remittance by remote sellers. Under current law, online retailers are exempt from collecting sales taxes in states where they have no physical presence, or "nexus." In these situations, the consumer is responsible for calculating the use tax and remitting the payment to the relevant jurisdictions, but compliance is low. As online sales continue to grow, local governments are losing billions of dollars in uncollected sales tax revenue.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Reauthorization. CSAC will continue to promote TANF reauthorization legislation that would restore state and county flexibility to tailor work and family stabilization activities to families' individual needs. The association also supports maintaining the focus on work activities under TANF, while recognizing that "work first" does not mean "work only."

Child Welfare Services. CSAC supports increased federal funding for services and income support needed by parents seeking to reunify with children who are in foster care. The association also supports increased financial support for programs that assist foster youth in the transition to self-sufficiency, including post-emancipation assistance such as secondary education, job training, and access to health care.

In addition, CSAC supports retaining the entitlement nature of the Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance programs and elimination of outdated rules that base the child's eligibility for funds on parental income and circumstances. Finally, CSAC supports federal funding to address the service needs of youth who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

In 2014, Congress approved the *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act* (HR 4980). The new law makes several federal reforms to better serve foster youth and includes provisions that focus on the emerging issue of sex trafficking of minors. While the Act exemplifies the bipartisan approach that Congress typically takes on child welfare issues, sufficient funding is needed to support the goals of the law.

CSAC Internal Monitoring

In addition, CSAC will continue to provide internal monitoring on a number of issues that are of significance to California's counties.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Levee Vegetation Removal Policy. In 2014, Congress approved a major water resources reform bill known as the *Water Resources Reform and Development Act* (PL 113-121). Among other things, the legislation includes language championed by CSAC that requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake a comprehensive reexamination of its controversial levee vegetation removal policy. CSAC will actively monitor the Corps' review process, which, under the law, must be concluded by December 10, 2015.

Health Reform Implementation. CSAC will support continued federal funding for the Affordable Care Act, including measures supporting state and county administration of the law.

Pension Tier Changes - Conflict with IRS Requirements. CSAC will continue to support legislation (HR 205) that would clarify the authority of local governments to propose and implement creative solutions to rising pension costs. At the same time, the association will urge the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to remove regulatory barriers that prevent local governments from implementing their own local pension reforms.

Tax-Exempt Status of Municipal Bonds. CSAC will oppose any proposal that seeks to limit or eliminate the tax treatment of municipal bonds. Under current law, investors are not required to pay federal income taxes on interest earned from most bonds issued by state and local governments. The tax exempt status of municipal bonds therefore provides counties with a cost-effective tool to finance public infrastructure projects and capital improvements.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). CSAC supports the creation of a new agricultural flood hazard area under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Specifically, Congress should establish a FEMA flood zone for agriculturally-based communities to allow replacement or reinvestment development in historically agricultural floodplains. This program would not require expensive elevation of structures or dry flood proofing, but would still have requirements for wet flood proofing certain structures. Congress should instruct FEMA - for these special agricultural zones - to adjust the NFIP rate to be more actuarially structured in order to evaluate the actual flood risk based on levees providing historical protection, as opposed to assuming that no protection exists.

It should be noted that Congressman John Garamendi (D-CA) introduced such legislation - the *Flood Insurance for Farmers Act of 2012* (HR 4020) - in the 112th Congress. The congressman is expected to reintroduce the bill in the 113th Congress.

Community Development Block Grant. CSAC will promote increased funding for the CDBG program to allow localities to continue to provide a wide variety of economic and community

development activities, such as home rehabilitation loans, public works and infrastructure projects, and various youth-related services. CDBG funds have been targeted for cuts in recent budget cycles, making it increasingly challenging to maintain adequate funding for the block grant.

Eliminate Inmate Exception. CSAC supports the elimination of the federal health benefits "inmate exception" for persons in county jails and detention centers who are in custody pending disposition of charges. Counties are prohibited from billing federal programs for the health services provided to jail inmates prior to adjudication.

Digital Goods and Services Tax Fairness Act. CSAC will oppose legislation that would prohibit state and local governments from imposing taxes on digital goods and services that are taxable under current law. Digital goods and services are online purchases that are downloaded directly by consumers, including music downloads, movies, and newspaper subscriptions. House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) may seek to package such a proposal with remote sales tax legislation.

Byrne Grant Funding. CSAC strongly supports prioritizing Byrne funding in the annual appropriations process and will work collaboratively with the California congressional delegation and others to secure and promote increased funding for the program and the positive local outcomes it helps achieve.

Federal Geothermal Royalties. CSAC opposes any legislative effort that would discontinue geothermal royalty payments to county governments. The Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 specifies a formula for the distribution of geothermal revenues to federal, state, and county governments. Under the formula, the federal government retains 25 percent of the revenue, the States receive 50 percent, and county governments receive 25 percent. Several recent attempts have been made to permanently repeal the sharing of geothermal revenues with counties.

Transient Occupancy Tax. CSAC will work to ensure counties' continued authority to assess and collect transient occupancy taxes on the full rate paid by the consumer for all appropriate transient lodging, regardless of whether the consumer pays through a hotel or any other vendor.

2-1-1 Statewide. CSAC has actively supported both state and federal legislation to help build and fund a statewide 2-1-1 referral system. 2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember telephone number that connects people to essential community information and services. In 2009, over 1.6 million Californians called 2-1-1 to find needed community services such as rent and mortgage assistance, food and shelter, health care, job training, transportation, child care, and senior care. 2-1-1 also plays an informational role during emergencies and disasters and relieves pressure on the 9-1-1 system at these critical times. The value of this service was evident during the 2007 San Diego wildfires when 2-1-1 call centers provided information and support to more than 130,000 callers in five days. Currently, just 27 of California's 58 counties have 2-1-1 service covering 92 percent of the population. CSAC will continue to work at both the state and federal levels to promote the need for a comprehensive statewide 2-1-1 system.

Medical and Long-Term Care Premiums. CSAC supports federal legislation to extend to all retirees the option to use tax free distribution from qualified retirement plans to pay for medical and long-term care premiums. In the Pension Protection Act of 2006, Congress granted specified

public safety officers the ability to use up to \$3,000 per year of tax-free dollars from their qualified retirement plans to pay for medical and long-term care premiums. Extension of this benefit to all retirees who participate in a qualified retirement plan could encourage people to save more while lessening the burden on government budgets to cover rising health care costs.

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