

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



ITEM: 2.2
(ID # 13388)

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, September 01, 2020

FROM : EXECUTIVE OFFICE:

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Federal Legislative Update: Receive and File the Legislative Update Report, All Districts. [\$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive and File the Legislative Update Report.


ACTION: Consent


Brian Nestande 8/27/2020

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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

Ayes: Jeffries, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Hewitt
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: September 1, 2020
xc: EO

Kecia R. Harper
Clerk of the Board
By: 
Deputy

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
NET COUNTY COST	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
SOURCE OF FUNDS:			Budget Adjustment:	No
			For Fiscal Year:	20/21

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

The purpose of Riverside County's Legislative Coordination Policy Program is to support legislation which benefits the County and its residents, and to oppose/amend legislation which might adversely affect the County. The following specific procedures are instituted to facilitate active participation by Departments, allow the Executive Office to act as a centralized "clearinghouse" for legislative matters, and to ensure that all advocacy efforts are entirely consistent with Board-approved positions. Per Board Policy A-27, The County's Legislative Advocates and or the Executive Office shall provide to the Board, monthly reports on the progress of County-sponsored legislation and issues at the forefront of discussion at State/Federal levels that may have a fiscal and/or operational impact on the County. This Form 11 is a Federal Legislative report for the month of August 2020.

FEDERAL REPORT: TO ACCESS THE FULL REPORT, PLEASE OPEN ATTACHMENT

Next COVID Bill and Stimulus Priorities

Senator McConnell released a "skinny" version of a COVID relief bill. This bill would – more or less – put into legislation what the WH is trying to do via executive orders and include liability protections and some additional funding for the USPS. It is unclear, though, if there is a plan to move this legislation or if this was merely a negotiating position. The Senate is not expected to return until September 8. The McConnell bill also contains a continuing resolution (CR) through December 27. This is the first appearance of a CR this year. Recall, a CR will have to pass before the end of next month.

The House passed a \$3.5T HEROES Act in May and the Senate in July released a series of bills known collectively as the HEALS Act at about \$1T. Other than the overall spending level, the sides are in disagreement over extension of Unemployment Insurance, aid to state and local governments and liability protections for businesses and schools that reopen.

Paycheck Protection Program:

The Trump administration has released new details on the biggest coronavirus-relief initiative that show more than 98% of loans approved after July 6 were for less than \$150,000, suggesting the program was reaching smaller businesses before shuttering in August. The

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Paycheck Protection Program had been criticized for not being quick enough in serving independent contractors, smaller firms and minority-owned companies.

USPS and the Fight Over Mail Voting:

The House Oversight and Reform Committee holds a hearing today with U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and Postal Service Board of Governors Chairman Robert M. Duncan, where Democrats are set to press the witnesses on operational changes at USPS made under DeJoy's leadership that have led to delays in service. The House Saturday passed a bill aimed at rolling back service cuts at the U.S. Postal Service which Democrats say could harm the ability of Americans to vote by mail in November's elections.

Agency Action Regarding COVID Treatments:

The FDA may update its emergency use authorization for Gilead's remdesivir drug to include patients hospitalized with moderate Covid-19 cases, despite mixed trial results. The agency in May approved remdesivir on an emergency basis for patients hospitalized with severe virus cases.

Aid for Private Schools:

The Trump administration's move to steer more coronavirus relief to private schools from a \$13 billion education fund was blocked by a federal judge Friday. In a defeat for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein in Seattle said the Trump administration's changes to CARES Act (Public Law 116-136) emergency funds in July illegally pulled from poor public schools to give to private schools with more resources.

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Federal Legislative Update for Riverside County

Current Status:

In 71 days the nation hold elections for the entire House of Representatives, 1/3 of the Senate and President, in addition to many state and local elections. Much of the business in Congress has slowed or halted as each party awaits the outcomes of the elections. The House made a rare break in its August recess to return on Saturday August 22 to vote on a bill regarding the US Post Office after concerns arose as to management of its capabilities to handle an expected increase in mail-in ballots. The US Postmaster General testified separately to committees in both the Senate and House. Covid-19 deaths in the U.S. could pass 300,000 by Dec. 1, according to the latest projections from the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. In two other scenarios, universal mask wearing could cut down deaths to around 241,000, while eased restrictions could push the toll as high as 421,000.

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It appears major reauthorization bills – (i.e. the National Defense Authorization Act and the Water Resources Development Act) – are lining up to conference in September, but not come up for votes until the lame duck session after the election. There has also been very little movement on an extension to the expiring surface transportation law with staff is assuming it will be extended when the CR passes.

Appropriations and Budget:

In the House July was largely consumed with Appropriations Committee and then House passage of ten of the 12 FY21 annual appropriations bill. (Legislative Branch and the Homeland Security bills are unresolved.) The Senate has not considered its appropriations bills in Committee or in the full Senate. As of August 10, House and Senate Appropriations Committee staff have turned their efforts from FY21 bills to shaping the first of likely two or three Continuing Resolutions to fund the federal government after FY20 ends on September 30. The first CR will likely take us to the third week of November or early December. Depending on the outcome of the elections (particularly the control of the Senate and White House), additional CRs may take us to February/March.

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COVID Relief Package Negotiations:

The House passed a \$3.5t HEROES Act in May and the Senate in July released a series of bills known collectively as the HEALS Act at about \$1t. Other than the overall spending level, the sides are in disagreement over extension of Unemployment Insurance, aid to state and local governments and liability protections for businesses and schools that reopen. White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows returned to the Capitol on Saturday in a bid to pressure Democrats into accepting a slimmed-down pandemic relief bill after weeks of deadlock. Meadows said aid for small businesses and other economic provisions should have been added to Democrats' postal service bill, and said he met with rank and file Democrats and Republicans to talk about possible paths to a compromise. Without an appointment he attempted unsuccessfully to meet with Speaker Pelosi.

It was hoped that the political fight over the post office may create an opening for resuming stalled negotiations on a virus relief bill as Democratic and Republican leaders hint at potential compromises and lawmakers agitate for action. President Donald Trump's spokeswoman said Wednesday that the administration was willing to look at \$25 billion in additional funding for the U.S. Postal Service. That's the amount Democrats put in their original stimulus plan and are including in post office legislation they expect to pass in the House on Saturday.

The White House willingness was accompanied by conditions -- agreement to GOP terms for provisions such as stimulus checks and small business aid.

More than half the Democrats in the House signed on to a letter urging Pelosi to use Saturday's session for a vote on a measure to revive the \$600 per week supplemental unemployment insurance that expired at the end of July. The 117 lawmakers on the letter organized by the moderate New Democrat Coalition include some progressives such as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Pelosi has previously rejected any move to pass parts of the Democratic relief plan separately. The House did not take up the unemployment aid or any other parts of the HEROES Act during Saturday's session.

The standoff has endured since talks among Pelosi, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows broke off Aug. 7. While the stock market has touched record highs, Federal Reserve officials, economists, governors and mayors have been warning that, with much of the previous stimulus exhausted, the risk to the economy grows without a renewed COVID response.

Senate Republicans offered their own \$1 trillion plan at the end of July. During negotiations, Pelosi and Schumer said they had offered to cut their \$3.5 trillion

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proposal by \$1 trillion if the White House and GOP would raise their by the same amount. They were rebuffed. The Trump administration sees a chance for Republicans and Democrats to agree on a smaller round of pandemic relief totaling \$500 billion that would omit the biggest areas of disagreement.

Senate Republicans have circulated a draft of their own scaled-back stimulus bill, which would fund a \$300 per week enhanced unemployment benefit through December, money for small business aid, and protection for employers against lawsuits stemming from Covid-19 infections. The "skinny" slimmed-down version of the \$1 trillion legislation Republican senators introduced in late July could have become an amendment to a House postal funding bill.

Pelosi suggested that Democrats had flexibility on their offer because they could come back and pass more stimulus in January, after an election in which they have a shot at taking the White House and gaining control of the Senate as well as expanding their House majority. "We're willing to cut our bill in half to meet the needs right now," she said "We'll take it up again in January." Pelosi's spokesman later said that she was referring to previous offers to meet Republicans "halfway, not cutting our bill in half."

Mnuchin and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell hoped that Pelosi's decision to break out \$25 billion in funding for the Postal Service from the original Democratic relief plan could provide an opening for talks. But he said he has no plan to bring senators back from break to vote on any legislation.

Senate GOP 'Skinny' Virus Plan Funds Education, Unemployment Aid:

Senate Republicans are circulating a slimmed-down Covid-19 stimulus package that would provide \$300 a week in unemployment benefits and funding for schools, while also changing the terms of funding provided earlier this year to the U.S. Postal Service. The "skinny" plan doesn't include the \$1,200 checks included in a roughly \$1 trillion Republican proposal known as the "HEALS Act."

It also omits the assistance to state and local governments that Democrats have sought, such as the \$1 trillion proposed in the "Heroes Act" (H.R. 6800) passed in May, instead leaving some of the big-ticket debates for later.

The Senate Republican's proposal includes a \$300 weekly supplemental unemployment insurance payment for the rest of the year, down from the \$600 weekly payment that expired at the end of July. The reduced amount matches the federal benefit under a memorandum that President Trump signed Aug. 8.

Liability protections for businesses and health care providers, a top priority for McConnell, are also included in the bill. The Paycheck Protection Program that provided forgivable loans to small businesses would be revived.

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The proposal would also convert into a grant the \$10 billion loan authorization provided to the Postal Service under the "CARES Act" stimulus law (Public Law 116-136).

The bill would provide \$105 billion in education funds. Two-thirds would go to elementary and secondary school grants, 28% would go to higher education institutions, and 5% would be available to the governor of each state for education purposes.

The bill would also provide \$45 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, including:

\$20 billion for the manufacturing, production, and purchase of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics;

\$6 billion to prepare for, distribute, administer, and track coronavirus vaccines; and \$16 billion that would go almost entirely to states, localities, health service providers, and other groups for testing, contact tracing, and surveillance.

USPS and the Fight Over Mail Voting:

The House Oversight and Reform Committee holds a hearing today with U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and Postal Service Board of Governors Chairman Robert M. Duncan, where Democrats are set to press the witnesses on operational changes at USPS made under DeJoy's leadership that have led to delays in service. The House Saturday passed a bill aimed at rolling back service cuts at the U.S. Postal Service which Democrats say could harm the ability of Americans to vote by mail in November's elections. The "Delivering for America" measure, which would allocate a further \$25 billion to the Postal Service, had limited Republican support. It passed 257 to 150, with 26 GOP members voting yes. The effort comes as the number of Americans using the mail to cast their ballots in November is expected to surge in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Passage of the bill is unlikely to have any impact on postal service operations. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has indicated the Senate wouldn't be taking up the House bill, and the White House threatened to veto it. President Trump spoke against the House action on Saturday continuing to draw a distinction between mail-in ballots, which he says are subject to fraud, and absentee voting which he supports. The Postal Service said in a statement yesterday it's concerned that some requirements of the House-passed bill will constrain its ability to make operational changes to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Agency Action Regarding COVID Treatments:

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patients hospitalized with severe virus cases. FDA also expanded access to Covid treatment with convalescent plasma to more sick Americans, widening access to a promising therapy before researchers fully understand how well it works. The Trump administration is mulling the possibility of issuing an emergency use authorization before the presidential election for a coronavirus vaccine being developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

Aid for Private Schools:

The Trump administration's move to steer more coronavirus relief to private schools from a \$13 billion education fund was blocked by a federal judge Friday. In a defeat for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein in Seattle said the Trump administration's changes to CARES Act (Public Law 116-136) emergency funds in July illegally pulled from poor public schools to give to private schools with more resources.

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National Party Conventions:

The four-day Republican National Convention begins today, culminating with Trump accepting the nomination for a second term from the White House. President Trump plans to speak every night—a departure from the norm where the candidate typically only spoke on the last night to accept his party's nomination. The four-day Democratic National Convention ran last week culminating with former Vice-President and Senator Joe Biden accepting his party's nomination and his selecting US Senator Kamala Harris (CA) as his Vice-Presidential running mate.

Kadesh & Associates continue to pursue County priorities in Congress and with federal agencies at the direction of County Executive staff.

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