

Washington Update

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

January 8, 2019

116TH CONGRESS CONVENES

A new Democratic House Majority was sworn in on January 3 and as expected, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) was elected Speaker. Fifteen Democratic members voted against Speaker Pelosi, who was otherwise able to solidify her support by agreeing that she would not serve in that role for more than four years. The Congressional action comes as the Federal government remains partially shut down because of the dispute over border wall funding. House and Senate leaders have been in talks with the White House but there is no sign of an agreement.

BUDGET UPDATE

Last week, House Democrats adopted two funding bills to try to reopen the Federal government: H.J. Res. 1, a continuing resolution to fund the Department of Homeland Security and H.R. 21 an omnibus measure for the other six FY 2019 appropriations bills that have not yet been signed into law. The text of the six-bill omnibus is roughly the same as the FY 2019 bills approved by the Senate last year. The agencies impacted include DOT, EPA, Interior, Justice and HUD. However, Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) does not plan to schedule votes on funding bills until agreement with the President is reached, and the omnibus does not include the \$5 billion of border security funding that Trump is demanding.

2019 EMERGING ISSUES

Despite the continued cloud of the partial government shutdown, several issues are emerging for possible Congressional action this year.

Climate Change

The new House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis will make recommendations to other standing committees for legislation that could include green energy, infrastructure re-

siliency and a carbon tax. Comprehensive legislation is expected, but these issues will also be addressed across the broad spectrum of Federal legislation, including the appropriations process and the infrastructure initiative.

Infrastructure

There is strong bipartisan support in Congress for revisiting the President's proposed infrastructure plan. A specific source of financing and a commitment to new, direct Federal spending will be key issues to resolve.

Budget Caps

The 2018 Bipartisan Budget Act increased the Federal spending caps for both defense and non-defense discretionary spending. That deal will expire on October 1, 2019, and new spending caps are needed to avoid across-the-board funding cuts through sequestration.

Immigration Reform/DACA Fix

Legislation to provide a fix for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program is one of several immigration issues left over from last year. These could be pulled into the current talks on border security or else taken up separately later in the year.

Health Care

Progressive members of Congress are eager to pursue the Medicare-for-all approach. Prescription prices, insurance market stabilization, and pre-existing conditions are other areas where legislation is possible.

SCAAP

The Bureau of Justice Assistance released the FY 2017 awards for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program in December and the County was awarded \$389,009 for costs for incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens.