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FROM: Jim Davenport
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The second session of the 118th Congress began with a new Speaker of the House, unfinished work on fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations, and the start of the 2024 presidential primaries. During a Presidential election year, Congress generally takes long breaks from their work in Washington to campaign and to hold Party conventions, and 2024 proved no different. While Congress worked steadily from January through late July, there was virtually no movement on any significant legislation, including FY 25 appropriations bills. In fact, FY 24 appropriations legislation was not signed into law until March 24th, leading to a late start to the FY 25 appropriations process.

On August 2nd, Congress broke for the five week summer recess and came back for a few weeks in September only to depart again to campaign. Thus, from early August until now, virtually no legislation significant to the County has advanced with the exception of a continuing resolution (CR) to keep Congress operating, which expires on December 20th. Congress is now wrestling with passing another CR, likely through March 2025. Despite the delays in FY 25 appropriations and the normal posturing that occurs leading up to Presidential elections, we are pleased to report significant progress on several fronts important to Contra Costa County.

Congressional Earmarks (Community Project Funding Requests)

When Congress finalized FY 24 appropriations legislation in March, the County was the recipient of the following community project funding projects:

- \$1 million – San Pablo Avenue Complete Streets/Bay Trail Gap Closure
- \$1.05 million – Concord Shelter and Service Center Roofing Project
- \$963,000 - Victims and Survivors Support Services
- \$150,000 – Knightsen Wetland Restoration Project

Additionally, \$5 million was included to fund the Harmful Algal Bloom Demonstration Program, for which the initial authorizing legislation specifically made the Delta eligible at the County's urging.

While the FY 24 process was wrapping up, we were pleased to assist the topnotch efforts of the CAO's office to help develop a strategy for the FY 25 process that included prioritizing our various requests, working with County departments in developing their requests, and editing their submissions to our delegation. Currently, we have obtained the following projects in pending FY 25 appropriations legislation:

- \$2 million – Marsh Drive Class 1 Bikeway Project
- \$2 million – Bay Point Library and Community Resource Center

- \$1.25 million – Treat Blvd Corridor Improvements
- \$600,000 – Organized Retail Theft Prevention and Prosecution Pilot Project
- \$500,000 – Healing and Justice for Labor Trafficking Survivors Project
- \$850,000 – North Bailey Road Active Transportation Corridor
- \$500,000 – Pacifica Avenue Safe Routes to School
- \$5 million – Harmful Algal Blooms demonstration program

Advocacy Related to the Sacramento -San Joaquin Delta

We have been pleased to work extensively with County officials and staff in advocating before the Federal government to achieve the County’s objectives regarding the Delta. These efforts have generally been in conjunction with other federal advocates working on behalf of their clients; specifically the other members of the Delta Counties Coalition (DCC).

In December 2023, we assisted in arranging meetings in Washington for DCC officials. This included meetings with members of the DCC congressional delegation and staffs of our Senators, as well as key committee staffers and, notably, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. During these meetings, DCC officials highlighted problems with the proposed Delta tunnel. These meetings set groundwork for additional advocacy on the Delta in 2024. This included further DCC and congressional engagement with the Corps of Engineers outlining our concerns over the issuance of a Clean Water Act permit. Likewise, the DCC congressional delegation sent a letter to Governor Newsom expressing concern and opposition to the Delta Conveyance Project.

Ongoing Army Corps of Engineers Projects

The Administration’s budget request submitted to Congress in March included \$2.896 million for maintenance dredging of San Pablo Bay and Mare Island Strait, and \$9.284 million for the maintenance dredging of Suisun Bay Channel, both of which have been high on the County’s priority list. No effort was undertaken to increase these amounts in Energy and Water Appropriations legislation via a congressional earmark. If it is determined that those amounts are inadequate, which we have not understood them to be, such an effort to increase them in the work plan will be undertaken.

Miscellaneous Advocacy Efforts

In addition to managing the issues on the County’s legislative program, and given the dynamic nature of events in Washington, we have also brought various matters of interest to the County’s attention and assisted the County when problems or opportunities surfaced that required communication with, or the input of, our delegation. This includes:

- Support from the County’s congressional delegation to receive our Head Start grant
- U.S. Treasury’s policy changes to the “obligation” of Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFRF) and Non-Congregate Shelter eligibility, including assisting in a congressional effort to support Project Roomkey Reimbursements
- Support for the County’s WaterSmart Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Grant for the Knightsen Wetland Restoration Project, including attending meetings with Abigail Fateman with Rep. DeSaulnier’s office to advocate for the project

- Supporting Rep. Garamendi's HOME Investment Partnerships Restoration and Improvement Act
- Securing congressional delegation support for the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant application
- Monitoring implementation of the Financial Data Transparency Act
- Monitoring Federal Aviation Administration's proposed rule on public charter flights that would impact JSX operations at County airport
- Department of Treasury Rules on Elective Payment for Inflation Reduction Act Clean Energy Payments
- Various disaster assistance legislation
- Various healthcare legislation
- Federal activities related to Artificial Intelligence

Activities such as these certainly contribute to the long-held perception around Capitol Hill and elsewhere in Washington that Contra Costa County is an active participant in federal affairs and that we serve as the County's office here in town; a place these offices can trust, knowing they are communicating – if through an agent – with appropriate County officials.

We would be pleased to elaborate on any aspect of this work and look forward to continuing these efforts on your behalf in the year ahead.