



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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September 2, 1999

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I would like to take this opportunity to convey the County of Los Angeles' key priorities for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2000 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations (Labor-HHS) bill. Health and human services are a primary responsibility of the County. Consequently, we are very concerned about the significant shortfall in the funding provided for these programs. The County urges the Congress and the Administration to reach a bipartisan agreement that addresses this shortfall.

The County's key Labor-HHS priorities include:

LABOR

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Programs: The County supports full funding of WIA programs, which provide employment and training services to economically disadvantaged individuals and dislocated workers. Such services are especially important in Los Angeles County, which has unemployment and poverty rates significantly higher than the national average.

Welfare to Work: The County supports reauthorization and additional funds for the Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program and for projects which provide employment-related services to non-custodial parents of children on welfare. The County also supports additional flexibility in administering WtW grants, including the ability to use WtW funds to serve former foster youth who often are not self-supporting after they age out of the foster care system.

HEALTH

Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act: The County has 35 percent of the AIDS cases in California and six percent of all cases nationwide. Increased funding of CARE Act programs is critical for the County to continue to respond to HIV/AIDS.

Public Health: The County is responsible for ensuring the public health of its communities. Federal support for a variety of public health programs is critical to assisting the County in addressing and protecting the health of its residents. The County supports increased Federal support for immunization, tuberculosis, maternal and child health, family planning, sexually transmitted disease, and childhood lead poisoning prevention programs, as well as new funding for violence and injury prevention, food safety, and chronic disease programs.

Medicaid/CHIP Outreach: The County urges an extension of the \$500 million Medicaid Outreach Fund to allow states, like California, to continue to access Federal funding to help ensure that families do not lose their Medicaid coverage as a result of welfare reform. California is one of several states that will lose access to unexpended Medicaid Outreach funds beginning December 31, 1999.

Mental Health: The County operates the second largest local public mental health agency in the country and serves more than 145,000 individuals annually, over one-half of whom are indigent or uninsured. The County supports the Administration's request for a 24 percent increase, to \$358 million, in FFY 2000 for the block grant. The County also supports an increase in children's mental health services.

Reimbursement of Undocumented Immigrant Emergency Medical Costs: The County supports full Federal reimbursement for the costs of emergency medical care to persons who are in the U.S. because of illegal immigration.

HUMAN SERVICES

Funding for Mandatory Programs: The County opposes reductions in the TANF Block Grant, the Child Care Development Block Grant, Medicaid, and Federal reimbursement for Medicaid and Food Stamps administrative costs.

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Title XX Social Services Block Grant (SSBG): The County supports full funding at the \$2.38 billion level for Title XX. In California, this block grant funds essential social services, such as child protective services to abused or neglected children and in-home supportive services, which enable severely disabled and frail elderly persons to live safely in their own homes, avoiding more costly institutionalization.

Refugee Assistance: The County supports the reauthorization and full funding of Refugee Act programs which provide cash and medical assistance, social services, and employment services to refugees. The County also supports making more funds available to serve refugees in the U.S. over five years who have been unable to become self-sufficient. As of January 1999, California had nearly 117,000 refugee TANF recipients who had been in the U.S. over five years, a number that exceeded the total TANF caseload in each of 34 states.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs: The County supports reauthorization and funding for OAA programs which provide essential nutrition, in-home, employment, and other supportive services that enable seniors to live in dignity and independently in their homes. OAA funds are used to provide over 20 million meals annually to seniors in California. The County's senior population of 1.2 million is the biggest of any county in the nation.

On behalf of the County of Los Angeles, thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



DON KNABE
Chairman of the Board
Supervisor, Fourth District
County of Los Angeles

TALKING PAPER

SUBJECT: Letter from Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina expressing concern about the naturalization backlog.

PURPOSE: To respond to Ms. Molina's concern that she has not received a further response from INS to her letter regarding the naturalization backlog in Los Angeles. In addition to the information provided below, INS has regularly met with staff from the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (Mark Tajima and Carla Kish) at monthly CBO meetings in Washington and Los Angeles.

ISSUES:

(1) **ISSUE 1** Increased funding for the Los Angeles District Office

Background:

Ms. Molina expressed the support of Los Angeles Country for INS' request for \$171 million in additional funds to support the naturalization initiative. Ms. Molina also stated her belief that it was unlikely that the Congress would approve INS' total request, and urged INS to allocate the more limited funds to areas with the highest backlog of naturalization applications.

Talking Points:

- The Congress did approve INS' total request for \$171 million in additional funds
- An appropriate portion of these funds were allocated to the Los Angeles District Office
- The Los Angeles District Office achieved significant results in reducing its naturalization backlog during FY 1999
 1. Completed 266,962 naturalization applications through the end of August 1999, compared with 109,461 for all of FY 1998
 1. Reduced projected processing time for naturalization applications from 41 months in October 1998, to 10 months as of the end of August 1999
 1. Reduced pending naturalization applications for 425,180 in October 1998, to 291,068 as of the end of August 1999

(2) **ISSUE 2** Scheduling of Fingerprints

Background:

Ms. Molina expressed concern that the ASCs were operating far under capacity, and urged INS to deploy an automated scheduling system

Talking Points:

- INS has an automated scheduling system for fingerprints, and has made adjustments and enhancements to the scheduler to take full advantage of ASC capacity
- INS now schedules naturalization applicants for appointments at a specific date and time, improving efficiency and reducing lines at the ASCs

(2) ISSUE 3 Law Enforcement Clearances

Background:

Ms. Molina urged INS to allow California Department of Justice generated disposition of arrest records to be used for approximately 50,000 naturalization applications on hold in California for local law enforcement clearances.

Talking Points:

- INS has recently completed a pilot of the use of California Department of Justice generated dispositions
- INS is currently reviewing the results of this pilot and reviewing implementation options to establish a permanent process for using these records

When decide to expand pilot?

(2) ISSUE 4 Management Changes

Background:

Ms. Molina urged INS to expeditiously identify a successor to Richard Rogers as District Director for Los Angeles. Ms. Molina also insisted that the Los Angeles District Office required an on-site naturalization backlog reduction manager.

Talking Points:

- Mr. Thomas Schiltgen has replaced Mr. Rogers as District Director for Los Angeles
- Ms. Fujie Ohata was appointed on-site backlog reduction manager for Los Angeles
- Ms. Ohata focused on production and provided the management support necessary for the Los Angeles District Office to make significant progress in reducing the naturalization backlog during the past year

Prepared by:

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