
MEMORANDUM

To: City of Beaumont
From: Townsend Public Affairs
Date: March 12, 2020
Subject: Legislative Report for the City of Beaumont

State Legislative Update

TPA is currently reviewing the bills after the introduction deadline last week and will provide a more comprehensive list in the upcoming weeks. Currently many of the bills introduced are non-substantive and are place holders for a bill that will be amended in the future.

Below is a list of upcoming legislative deadlines:

April 2: Spring Recess begins
April 13: Legislature Reconvenes from Spring Recess
June 15 – State budget must be passed by midnight

COVID-19

On March 12, 2020, Governor Newsom issued an executive order further enhancing State and Local Government's Ability to respond to COVID-19. Among other items, the order "*Allows local or state legislative bodies to hold meetings via teleconference and to make meetings accessible electronically.*" The full executive order can be found here. Item #11 in the executive order also addresses suspension of certain Brown Act rules.

Last night, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued an updated policy for public gatherings in response to COVID-19. CSDA is following this policy and encourages all special districts to thoroughly review the policy and consider its application to your district's operations and activities.

In times where the health and safety of our communities are at stake, it is important for public officials at all levels to inform ourselves of the best available facts and provide clear and accurate communication. We want to ensure that we are taking the appropriate steps and that our actions and communications do not lead to worse outcomes than necessary. This means following the guidance of health experts to demonstrate calm and thoughtful leadership.

LAO Report on Governor's Homelessness Plan

On February 11, the nonpartisan LAO issued a report on the Governor's homelessness plan that was included in his January Budget proposal. The report highlights both the 16 percent increase in the number of homeless individuals in the State from 2018 to 2019 (the total number now at approximately 151,000), as well as the increase in homelessness funding provided by local, state, and federal governments. It also highlights the \$1.2 billion investment from the State over the past two years to assist local governments in addressing the homelessness crisis.

Most notably, the report states that the "Governor's proposal raises key questions and falls short of articulating a clear strategy" for homelessness. The report also states that the "Governor's proposed approach is less likely to make a meaningful ongoing impact on the state's homelessness crisis." The LAO criticizes the Governor's plan to spend an additional \$750 million that would flow to regional administrators who would decide how the funds will be spent. The LAO instead credits local governments as the experts on the homeless challenges facing their communities.

This report was followed up by a joint committee hearing between the Senate Committees on Human Services, Governance and Finance, and Housing. The purpose of the hearing was to hear about the impacts of housing in different parts of the state and how the Governor's proposal would affect different areas. Although purely informational, homelessness will be a key priority for both budget and policy discussions.

Housing

SB 902 is aimed at providing a streamlined process for "middle density" projects. The bill authorizes two, three, or four homes per parcel to be built by-right in residential areas, as follows: 2 units per parcel in unincorporated areas or cities less than 10,000 people; 3 units per parcel in cities between 10,000 – 50,000 people; and 4 units per parcel in cities with populations above 50,000. The bill would require these projects to comply with local height limits, setbacks, objective design standards, and demolition restrictions. SB 902 also contains renter protection provisions. These provisions do not apply to projects that would be located in a very high fire severity zone.

SB 902 also authorizes local governments to rezone neighborhoods for up to 10 homes per parcel. This would require a city council to pass a resolution to adopt the greater density and exempts that zoning action from being considered a project under CEQA. To be eligible for increased zoning, the area must be urban infill, or be near high quality public transportation or a jobs-rich area (to be determined by HCD/OPR).

SB 902 has been referred to the Senate Housing Committee, which is Chaired by Senator Wiener. The bill has not yet been scheduled for a hearing, but the measure will need to pass out of the committee prior to the House of Origin policy committee deadline of April 24th.

LEAP Funding

On February 11, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) announced the release of the Local Early Action Plan (LEAP) grant NOFA. There is approximately \$119 million available for local governments statewide. This funding comes from the housing trailer bill (AB 101) that was signed into law last year.

The funding is for cities to help prepare for the upcoming Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle. The funding is non-competitive, and awards will be based on population. Awards will range from \$65,000 for populations under 20,000 to \$1.5 million for populations over 750,000. Most mid-size cities are expected to receive between \$300,000 - \$500,000. The due date for applications is July 1, 2020

Federal Legislative Update

Congress has spent the past two weeks working on a bill package to mitigate the uncertainties due the COVID 19 outbreak. House leadership finalized a second emergency spending package to provide billions for paid sick leave, nutrition aid, expanded unemployment insurance and other measures in a coronavirus bill they plan to pass today, possibly without much bipartisan support.

The week of March 2, Congress voted to approve emergency funding to help speed the development of vaccines, bolster access to testing and treatments, and expand access to telemedicine services. Funding included:

- \$8.3 Billion in emergency funding appropriations, including
 - \$1 billion to administer up to \$7 billion in Small Business Administration loans
 - \$2.2 billion for the CDC to support public health agencies at the federal, state and local levels
 - \$1 billion for state and local governments
 - Roughly half of that money, \$475 million, will be available immediately within the next 30 days.
 - \$6.5 Billion to the Health and Human Services funding

Funding will become available the week of March 16. As of Mar 2, 2.5 million test kits have been disbursed, and 3 million more kits are being delivered by the end of this week. Those over 65 or those with chronic diseases that affect immune system are more vulnerable and will have more severe symptoms. Children with lung issues are also more vulnerable as well. The federal government is encouraging healthy people to keep donating blood, as there is a shortage. We will continue to follow up with any information as it is received. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Second Package Bill Provisions

- New Paid Leave Program: The bill creates an emergency paid leave program through the Social Security Administration for people who have a diagnosis, have been quarantined, are caring for someone who is quarantined, or are caring for someone who is unable to care for themselves, such as a child whose school has been closed.
 - They would take 14 days or more off of work and would receive two-thirds of their average monthly pay, with a \$4,000 cap
 - Eligibility starts Jan. 19, 2020, and would run for a year after enactment. Benefits would be available retroactively
- \$1 Billion in Unemployment Insurance Grants: The bill provides \$1 billion in unemployment insurance grants, including \$500 million in grants to states that experience a 10% increase

in unemployment—not a 10 percentage point increase, a point briefly debated at the Rules Committee meeting—and \$500 million for administrative costs.

- **Fast Medicaid Funds:** The bill would increase the federal reimbursement to states to encourage them to expand Medicaid eligibility to low-income individuals.
 - The measure, similar to a provision in the 2009 stimulus (Public Law 111-5), is a fast way to get money to states and give them incentives to expand Medicaid coverage.
- **Nutrition Measures:** The bill would suspend work requirements for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The bill would also provide funding for USDA programs such as:
 - \$500 million for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children
 - \$400 million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program
 - \$100 million in nutrition assistance grants for Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa
 - Enough funds to provide benefits up to the value of meals for households with a child in a school that closes for at least five consecutive days due to a public health emergency
 - Enough funds, if necessary, for the secretary of the Agriculture Department to purchase commodities for emergency distribution
 - An additional \$250 million for the Senior Nutrition Program in the Administration for Community Living to provide about 25 million additional home-delivered meals to low-income seniors is also included.
- **OSHA Plan for Health Care Workers:** The bill would direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to require health care employers to develop an infectious disease exposure control plan within 30 days to protect workers from the virus.

Next Steps

The funds provided under the bill would be designated as emergency requirements and wouldn't count against the discretionary spending cap for fiscal 2020. On March 11, President Donald Trump said in a national address that travel from European countries would be suspended for 30 days. He also ordered the Treasury Department to defer some tax deadlines, and called on Congress to pass a payroll tax cut and boost funding for the Small Business Administration. Those provisions aren't included in the package. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are also negotiating additional legislation.