
MEMORANDUM

To: City of Beaumont
From: Townsend Public Affairs
Date: July 1, 2020
Subject: Monthly Report for the City of Beaumont — June 2020

State Legislative Update

In June, the Legislature was focused primarily on passing a State Budget before the June 15 constitutional deadline. While the Legislature met its obligation to pass a budget by June 15, the budget bill did not reflect a finalized deal between the Administration and the Legislature. Subsequently, the Legislature then passed a “Junior Budget Bill” that was negotiated with the Administration, as well as a majority of the budget trailer bills needed to implement the State Budget. On June 29, Governor Newsom signed the \$202 billion State Budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Legislature was also actively considering legislation in June to meet several legislative deadlines. June 5 was the last day for policy committees to report non-fiscal bills to the floor, and June 19 was the last day for fiscal committees to hear and report bills to the floor. June 22-26 was dedicated to floor session only for the Senate, and the Assembly was told to return to Sacramento in order to pass the budget. June 25 was also the deadline for the Legislature to pass a measure in time to qualify for the November ballot.

Lastly, Governor Newsom has continued his press briefings to update the State on the status of COVID-19 in California. With counties re-opening across the State, COVID-19 cases, as well as the positivity testing rate, have begun to increase. Specifically, in the last seven days, there has been a 45 percent increase in the number of positive cases, a 5.9 percent increase in the positivity rate, and a 45 percent increase in the number of hospitalizations in the last two weeks. This has resulted in the Governor taking more action to mitigate the spread of the virus by enacting a statewide face-covering order and re-closing certain business sectors in 19 counties throughout the State.

Below are the upcoming deadlines for the Legislature:

July 3 – Independence Day observed

July 13 – Legislature reconvenes from Summer Recess

July 31 – Last day for policy committees to hear and report fiscal bills to fiscal committees

August 7 – Last day for policy committees to meet and report bills

Governor's COVID-19 Action Summary

Below is a summary of the major COVID-19 actions taken by the State Administration in June:

- **July 1 – Stay at Home Order:** Governor Newsom announced that certain sectors are being ordered to close indoor operations, due to the increased likelihood of spread and the ability to mitigate that spread. These closures are to go into effect immediately in the 19 counties that are on the County Monitoring List.
- **June 30 – Eviction Moratorium:** Governor Newsom issued an executive order extending authorization for local governments to halt evictions for renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, through September 30.
- **June 25 – Budget Emergency Declaration:** Governor Newsom issued a proclamation of a budget emergency to make additional resources available to fund the state's ongoing emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the availability of funding for personal protective equipment, medical equipment and other expenditures as necessary to support a potential hospital surge and provide necessary services to vulnerable populations.
- **June 22 – Recycling:** The order extends a waiver that allows retailers to temporarily pause in-store redemption of beverage containers to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The order also temporarily suspends the requirement for recycling centers to hold a minimum number of hours of operation.
- **June 18 – Statewide Mask Order:** The California Department of Public Health released guidelines mandating the public to wear face coverings while in public with a limited number of exemptions.
- **June 15 – Executive Order:** Governor Newsom signed an executive addressing a variety of issues in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **June 8 – Respirators:** Governor Newsom announced that California-based BYD North America received certification from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to produce N95 respirators for the state.
- **June 5 – Personal Protective Equipment:** Governor Newsom signed an executive order that will help increase the availability of over-the-counter drugs, such as hand sanitizer, and medical devices, such as respirators, ventilators and masks, which are in demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 State Budget

On June 29, Governor Newsom signed the 2020 State Budget Bill, as well as a majority of the budget trailer bills needed to implement the various portions of the State Budget. The Assembly reconvened from their summer recess on June 26 to vote on the Junior Budget Bill and other measures approved by the Senate on June 25. The measures were sent to the Governor so that he could act on the budget prior to the constitutional deadline.

Budget Deficit

The budget agreement addresses the State's \$54 billion budget deficit through a combination of cuts, fund deferrals, and temporary revenue increases. The State Budget adopts budgetary cuts to the State's university systems, courts, housing-related programs, and other investments, as well as realizes savings from state employee salary adjustments; however, these cuts can be rescinded if California receives additional federal assistance prior to October 2020. Any future federal aid will restore these specific cuts and deferrals on a one-time basis.

Overall, the State Budget that was approved by the Legislature rejects most of the programmatic cuts that were contained in the Governor's May Revise. The Budget does contain the Governor's "trigger up" structure of cuts but adopts many of the Legislature's preferred means of addressing the budget shortfall. The Budget does not contain the proposed May Revise cuts to education and community colleges, but instead defers billions in education funding to future budget years. The Budget also rejects \$2.2 billion in cuts that were proposed in the May Revise for health and human services programs, including programs for seniors.

Budget Highlights – Local Governments

Included within the budget agreement is federal funding to help address the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, the budget contains \$500 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds for cities, which will be allocated with \$225 million for cities with populations above 300,000 and \$275 million for cities with populations below 300,000. The Department of Finance will be working quickly to disperse these funds, as federal law requires the funds to be expended by the end of the calendar year or else the funding will revert to the federal government.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is receiving \$550 million in CARES Act funding to help secure shelter for homeless individuals who are at risk for contracting COVID-19. Specifically, the funding can be used for acquisition, or acquisition and rehabilitation, of motels, hotels, or hostels; master leasing of properties; acquisition of other sites and assets; and the relocation costs for individuals who are being displaced as a result of rehabilitation of existing units.

An additional \$300 million from the State's General Fund is provided to local governments to address homelessness, building on the state's investments of recent years. This funding will be distributed in the form of Round 2 of the Homeless Housing Assistance Prevention (HHAP) program as follows: \$90 million to Continuums of Care; \$130 million to cities with populations over 300,000; and, \$80 million to counties.

Housing Legislation

Despite the limited number of bills being heard this year compared with other years due to COVID-19 and the modified legislative calendars, the Senate and Assembly are proposing housing packages that aim to increase the amount of housing development throughout the State. Assemblymember David Chiu (D-San Francisco), chair of the Housing and Community Development Committee, and Senate Pro Tempore Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) have released a housing package that includes the following bills:

- **AB 725 (Wicks D)** Amends Housing Element law to require certain jurisdictions to zone for multi-family moderate and above-moderate income housing.

- **AB 1279 (Bloom D)** Requires certain development sites in high resource areas to allow for more density and height and makes these sites subject to "use by-right" approval.
- **AB 1851 (Wicks D)** Allows a religious institution to develop an affordable housing project at a place of worship owned by the religious institution even if the development requires the religious institution to reduce the number of religious-use parking spaces available at the place of worship.
- **AB 2323 (Friedman D)** Expands the application of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemptions for housing and other projects by permitting community plans to serve as the basis for exemption of residential, mixed-use and employment center projects near transit areas.
- **AB 2345 (Gonzalez D)** Revises Density Bonus Law to increase the maximum allowable density and the number of concessions and incentives a developer can seek.
- **AB 3040 (Chiu D)** Allows cities and counties to receive a specified credit towards meeting their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for rezoning single-family neighborhoods to allow four units per parcel.
- **AB 3107 (Bloom D)** Makes housing an authorized use on commercially zoned land.
- **AB 3279 (Friedman D)** Revises California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) litigation procedures by reducing the deadline for a court to commence hearings from one year to 270 days.
- **SB 902 (Wiener D)** This bill permits a local government to pass an ordinance to zone any parcel up to 10 units of residential density per parcel, at a height specified by the local government in the ordinance, if the parcel is located in a transit-rich area, a jobs-rich area, or an urban infill site.
- **SB 995 (Atkins D)** This bill extends for four years the Jobs and Economic Improvement Through Environmental Leadership Act of 2011 until 2025; and makes housing projects that meet certain requirements eligible for certification under the Act.
- **SB 1085 (Skinner D)** This bill makes several changes to density bonus law (DBL) and provides additional benefits to housing development projects that include moderate-income rental housing units.
- **SB 1120 (Atkins D)** This bill requires ministerial approval of duplexes and specified parcel maps.
- **SB 1385 (Caballero D)** This bill enacts the Neighborhood Homes Act, which establishes housing as an allowable use on any parcel zoned for office or retail uses.

These bills will be considered in their respective policy committees later this month. TPA will continue to advocate on behalf of the City as the Legislature considers these housing measures for the remainder of the 2020 legislative session.

Social Justice and Equity Legislation

Since the death of George Floyd that has received statewide and national attention last month, the Legislature has been focused on advancing social equity and police reform legislation. Namely, the Legislature has passed ACA 5 (Weber, D-San Diego), a bill that repeals Proposition 209, the State constitutional provision that passed in 1996 that prohibited California from granting preferential treatment to (or discriminating against) any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting. The bill, which is a constitutional amendment, received a two-thirds vote in both houses and does not require a signature from the Governor to qualify for the ballot.

Additionally, the Legislature is considering AB 1196 (Gipson, D-Carson), a bill that would prohibit a law enforcement agency from authorizing the use of a carotid restraint or a choke hold when making an arrest. The bill has received some bipartisan support and is scheduled to be heard in the Senate once it is referred to a policy committee. Below is a list of additional social justice and equity bills in the Legislature:

- **AB 1506 (McCarty D)** This bill would create a division within the Department of Justice to, upon the request of a law enforcement agency, review the use-of-force policy of the agency and make recommendation.
- **AB 1835 (Weber D)** Requires each local educational agency (LEA) expend unspent supplemental and concentration Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) grant funds toward services for unduplicated pupils in future years.
- **AB 1950 (Kamlager D)** Specifies that a court may not impose a term of probation longer than two years for a felony conviction and one year for a misdemeanor conviction, except as specified.
- **AB 2054 (Kamlager D)** This bill creates the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems Act Grant Pilot Program (C.R.I.S.E.S. Pilot Program) to expand community participation in emergency response planning.
- **AB 2342 (McCarty D)** Creates a program through which parolees, except those required to register as a sex offender, are able to earn "reintegration credits" to reduce the term of parole.
- **AB 2405 (Burke D)** Establishes that it is the policy of the state that every child and family in California has a right to safe, decent, and affordable housing.
- **AB 3121 (Weber D)** Establishes an eight-member task force to do the following: study the issue of reparations for African Americans; propose ways to educate the California public about its findings; make recommendations on the forms that reparations might take; and submit a report of its findings to the Legislature

These bills will be considered in their respective Senate policy committees later this month. TPA will continue to advocate on behalf of the City as the Legislature considers these measures for the remainder of the 2020 legislative session.

November 2020 Ballot Update

June 25 was the last day for the Legislature to pass measures to qualify for the November 2020 ballot. TPA will be providing a comprehensive update on the qualified ballot measures, but below is a brief summary of these initiatives:

- **1880. (19-0022A1):** Authorizes bonds to continue funding stem cell and other medical research.
- **1864. (19-0003):** Changes requirements for transferring property tax base to replacement property. Expands business property reassessment.
- **1870. (19-0008A1):** Increases funding for public schools, community colleges, and local government services by changing tax assessment of commercial and industrial property.
- **1840. (17-0044):** Restricts parole for non-violent offenders. Authorizes felony sentences for certain offenses currently treated only as misdemeanors.
- **1862. (19-0001):** Expands local governments' authority to enact rent control on residential property.
- **1883. (19-0026A1):** Changes employment classification rules for app-based transportation and delivery drivers.
- **1882. (19-0025A1):** Authorizes state regulation of kidney dialysis clinics. Establishes minimum staffing and other requirements.
- **1879. (19-0021A1):** Amends consumer privacy laws.
- **1856. (18-0009):** Referendum to overturn a 2018 law that replaced money bail system with a system based on public safety risk.

Additionally, the measures below were recently passed by the Legislature and will qualify for the November 2020 ballot.

- **ACA 5 – Government preferences:** The California Constitution, pursuant to provisions enacted by the initiative Proposition 209 in 1996, prohibits the state from discriminating against, or granting preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting. The California Constitution defines the state for these purposes to include the state, any city, county, public university system, community college district, school district, special district, or any other political subdivision or governmental instrumentality of, or within, the state. This measure would repeal these provisions.
- **ACA 6 – Elections, disqualification of voters:** Would direct the Legislature to provide for the disqualification of electors who are serving a state or federal prison sentence for the conviction of a felony. This measure would also delete the requirement that the Legislature provide for the disqualification of electors while on parole for the conviction of a felony. The measure would provide for the restoration of voting rights upon completion of the prison term.

Additional information regarding these ballot measures can be found on the Secretary of State's website.

Additional Legislation

AB 1063 (Petrie-Norris): Planning and Zoning Law: housing elements: accessory dwelling units: adequate site substitutes.

This bill would increase the 25% cap of local governments to count projects that have been rehabilitated, converted, or preserved towards their RHNA numbers to 50% and clarify that committed assistance be demonstrated early enough such that the housing units would be completed and available before the end of the planning period. Expand the ability for cities to count ADUs as affordable units towards RHNA requirements by establishing an accepted assumption for estimating ADU production and affordability levels. Require jurisdictions that have voter-approved measures to submit a draft Housing Element to HCD by their stated deadline. **This bill is now in the Senate.**

SB 795 (Beall): Economic development: housing: workforce development: climate change infrastructure

This bill allocates \$10 billion over five years to several existing housing, homelessness, and pre-apprenticeship programs, as well as creating two new infrastructure financing programs at the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (Go-Biz). **SB 795 passed and has been referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee.**

SB 899 (Wiener): Planning and zoning: housing development: higher education institutions, nonprofit hospitals, or religious institutions

This bill provides that housing is a use by right on land owned by a religious institution, nonprofit hospital, or nonprofit college, as specified. **SB 899 passed and has been referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee.**

SB 1138 (Wiener): Housing element: emergency shelters: rezoning of sites

This bill makes changes to housing element law with regards to where shelters may be zoned, as specified. This bill also requires localities that fail to adopt a legally compliant housing element within 120 days of the statutory deadline, to complete a rezone program within one year instead of the current three-year requirement. **SB 1138 passed and has been referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee.**

SB 1299 (Portantino): Housing development: incentives: rezoning of idle retail sites

This bill requires the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) to administer a program to provide grants to local governments that rezone idle sites used for a big box commercial shopping center to instead allow the development of workforce housing, as defined. **SB 1299 passed and has been referred to the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee.**

Federal Legislative Update

In June, protests related to racial justice and police brutality dominated the federal landscape, while the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 continued to be prominently featured in policy and political circles. The rate of infection increased during the month of June, as many states began various phases of reopening.

Coronavirus Aid Packages

White House Advisor Peter Navarro indicated President Trump wants to see a Phase 4 price tag around \$2 trillion and wants to focus on bringing manufacturing jobs back to the United States. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has stressed to President Trump that he would prefer a smaller package, no more than \$1 trillion. As a reminder, the House passed a Phase 4 package, the HEROES Act, last month worth \$3 trillion.

The most contentious sticking point in the next coronavirus aid package is expected to be the question of how to help the more than 40 million unemployed Americans. The next coronavirus aid package is expected to move in the coming weeks. Some proposals we have heard discussed among Congressional staff include:

- Continuation of supplemental \$600 per week on top of regular unemployment benefits
 - Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has publicly indicated that Republicans will not support an extension of the \$600 weekly unemployment supplemental that Congress passed in March. Some GOP lawmakers have said they believe the additional aid provides a disincentive to return to work.
 - Most Democrats in the House and Senate have argued that the supplemental unemployment benefits, which are set to expire at the end of July, should be made to last beyond the summer.
- Business payroll subsidies
 - Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) is going to introduce a bill to have the federal government subsidize business' payrolls during the pandemic.
- Back-to-work bonus
 - Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) is working on a proposal to provide workers with an additional \$450 a week bonus on top of their current wages as an incentive to go back to work
 - President Trump has signaled early support for this idea
- Automatic economic stabilizer
 - Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer is considering a push to automatically tie unemployment benefits to the condition of the economy
 - Speaker Nancy Pelosi has also publicly endorsed this idea, saying it would avoid the political wrangling that could otherwise threaten to hold up much-needed aid.
- Tourism
 - In Washington DC there are behind-the-scenes conversations about a potential proposal to boost tourism by providing tax breaks for Americans who travel inside the United States. It is being actively considered by the White House for inclusion in the next coronavirus stimulus package. Here are some preliminary details that are being discussed:
 - The tourism tax incentive would be up to \$4,000 per household.
 - It would permit a refund of 50 percent of qualified travel expenses through the end of 2021

- Qualified expenses would be defined as any purchase over \$50 during travel inside the United States on “meals, lodging, recreation, transportation, amusement or entertainment, business meetings or events, and gasoline.”
- Restaurants
 - Senator Roger Wicker (R-MI) and Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) announced a bill that would create a dedicated relief fund for restaurants.
 - The bill would set up a \$120 billion grant program to help restaurants with fewer than 20 locations that aren’t publicly traded
 - Senator Wicker said he is aiming to get the legislation included in the next coronavirus relief package, which he said he anticipated Congress would take up in mid- to late-July.
 - As a senior Senate Republican, Wicker has influence on the Senate response to the House-passed HEROES Act.

Another point of contention that has yet to be negotiated is using state and local funding to repair coronavirus-related revenue loss. Several proposals recommend different funding levels and allocation formulas, with no clear front-runner. Ultimately, both Democrats and Republicans seem to recognize the need for additional state and local funding, and will likely allocate additional funding with some restrictions.

Phase 4 negotiations are expected to begin in earnest in the next few weeks, with a package finalized after Independence Day.

Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance

This month, the Treasury Department released updated FAQs on the Coronavirus Relief Fund, which allocated funds to state and local governments through the CARES Act. New information includes:

- CRF money can be used to offset the 25% matching requirement for FEMA’s Public Assistance Grants.
- If you are using CRF money to fund public safety, public health, health care, human services, and similar employees whose services are substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, you are not required to track time of the employees responding to COVID-19.
- CRF money can be given to non-profits to distribute COVID-related assistance
- CRF money can be used towards marketing expenses for local tourism industries. The guidance makes the following stipulations:

Policing Bills

Following protests across the nation, Republicans and Democrats introduced police reform bills in June to address a variety of issues.

The Democrats’ preferred bill, the “Justice in Policing Act” (H.R. 7120), is sponsored by Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Karen Bass (D-CA) and Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) in the House. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Kamala Harris (D-CA) are the leaders of the effort in the Senate.

The bill would do the following:

- Drop the threshold for defining police misconduct from “willfully” violating constitutional rights to doing so with knowing or reckless disregard.
- Weaken the qualified immunity that broadly shields police officers from being liable for damages for rights violations.
- Ban choke-holds like the one used by police in the death of George Floyd, as well as no-knock warrants, which led to the death of Breonna Taylor in Louisville in March.
- Make lynching a federal crime for the first time.
- Create a national registry of police violations
- Require Federal officers to wear body cameras.
- Place new limits on federal funding for local and state police
- Require bias training and the use of de-escalation tactics in order for grants to be approved.
- Curtail the transfer of military weaponry to state and local police.

The bill passed the House and awaits movement in the Senate. Additionally, Congressional Republicans, led by Senator Tim Scott (R-SC), released their own bill, the “Just and Unifying Solutions to Invigorate Communities Everywhere (JUSTICE) Act” (S. 3985).

A summary of the JUSTICE Act is as follows:

- Requires reports on no-knock warrants
- Creates compliance assistance grants
- Incentivizes banning of chokeholds
- Criminalizes falsifying police incident reports
- Establishes a new Body-Worn Cameras grant program
- Requires law enforcement agencies to maintain and appropriately share disciplinary records for officer hiring consideration
- Makes lynching a federal crime
- Establishes a Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys
- Requires DOJ to develop and provide training on de-escalation and implementation and fulfillment of duty to intervene policies.
- Establishes a National Criminal Justice Commission
- Allows COPS grants to be used by law enforcement agencies to hire personnel reflective of the communities they serve
- Urges consensus development of best practices for policing tactics, employment processes, community transparency and administration. Studies on community Use of Force review boards, law enforcement officer engagement on issues related to mental health, homelessness, and addiction, and proposals on improving accountability for DOJ grants.
- Makes it unlawful for a federal law enforcement officer to engage in a sex act while serving or with an individual who is under arrest, in detention, or in an officer’s custody.

Although both the Republican and Democratic bills address police violence, there are relatively few similar provisions between the two bills – both bills would make lynching a federal crime, but take different approaches to police misconduct tracking and penalties, qualified immunity, choke-holds, no-knock warrants, body cameras, and federal funding.

The Democrats, in opposition to the Republicans' version of policing reform, blocked consideration of the bill in the Senate. This created an impasse between both sides of the aisle on police reform, and a path forward is not clear.

DACA

In June, the Supreme Court ruled that the Trump Administration cannot shut down the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program using its current plan. The 5-4 ruling, written by Chief Justice Roberts, said that the government failed to give an adequate justification for ending the federal program, and that the Department of Homeland Security did not act properly when it ordered the program ended in 2017. The majority opinion described the decision as "arbitrary and capricious".

The ruling also indicated that the Department of Homeland Security does have the authority to shut down the program. The Trump Administration can try again to shut it down by following the law and offering a more detailed explanation for its action.

Small Business

This month, Congress passed and the President signed legislation to extend the Paycheck Protection Program's former eight-week period during which businesses must use funds to have loans forgiven to 24 weeks or December 31, whichever comes sooner. In addition, on July 1, Congress passed legislation (S 4116) to extend the deadline to apply for businesses to apply for PPP loans from June 30 to August 8. President Trump is expected to sign the PPP extension legislation into law.

Following Congressional pressure, the Department of Treasury and the Small Business Administration announced they will release the names of companies and nonprofits that got loans larger than \$150,000 under the Paycheck Protection Program, along with other identifying information. This is expected to cover nearly 75 percent of the over \$500 billion lent out so far, though a minority of the 4.5 million total beneficiaries. Additionally, Congress will get complete access to individual loan data from the Paycheck Protection Program, beyond what the agencies have agreed to share with the broader public.

Infrastructure

This month, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced the House's plan to package several typically unrelated bills into one massive "infrastructure" package, which will include more than \$1.5 trillion in funding. Deemed the "Moving America Forward Act" (H.R. 2), House leadership indicated the bill will focus on resiliency, job creation, commerce, and restoring the economy.

The Moving America Forward Act will center primarily around the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST Act), which serves as the House's version of the Surface Transportation Reauthorization. This legislation, which provides nearly \$500 billion in highway and transportation funds over 10 years, has been discussed for finalization by the House Transportation Committee over the past two days. In addition to the INVEST Act, the Moving America Forward Act also will incorporate the following inclusions:

- \$100 billion for low-income schools
- \$100 billion for affordable housing
- \$100 billion for broadband

- \$70 billion for the electric grid
- \$65 billion for water projects, including \$2.25 billion for PFAS grants
- \$30 billion for hospitals
- \$25 billion for the Postal Service

The “Moving America Forward Act” is currently being amended on the House floor and is expected to pass. TPA has worked with Congress to ensure the inclusion of programs like Community Block Development (CDBG) and INFRA Grants, continued funding for programs such as EPA’s Brownfields Program, aircraft noise mitigation, and water infrastructure.

TPA has also worked to ensure passage of key amendments such as Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher’s (D-TX) amendment submission, which amends the legislation to designate funds allocated through the Highway Trust Fund for undergrounding public utilities. This bill language is critical, as it would help to mitigate the cost of recurring damages from extreme weather events, wildfire or other natural disasters.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

In June, the Senate voted 73-25 to clear the bill to secure mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million annually and provide billions to address maintenance backlogs on the nation’s public lands. If this bill is finalized, the LWCF would no longer be subject to the annual appropriations negotiation process.

The measure now heads to the House, where prospects for passage are strong. House Natural Resources Chair Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) is publicly backing the bill and saying it has bipartisan support, including from Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD).

At the federal level, permanent reauthorization and a shift to mandatory funding would protect LWCF in perpetuity. Previously, the program was subject to reconsideration and possible elimination in each annual appropriations cycle and put the program much more at the whims of the political process. If permanent reauthorization is finalized, it would take another act of Congress to unauthorize the program and reduce or eliminate funding, which is extremely difficult and unlikely. With permanent authorization, LWCF can make long-term plans and long-term investments in communities, knowing that their funding is safe.

In every conversation about the Land and Water Conservation Fund TPA has with members of Congress and their staff, we have always stressed the importance of permanent reauthorization and a shift to mandatory funding, since this would create reliability and enshrine a commitment to conservation for generations to come. The push from TPA and other stakeholders has been ongoing for years, and this is the closest legislation has come to making the Fund permanent.