To expand communications between Washington and California, the California Institute provides periodic news bulletins regarding current activity on Capitol Hill and other information that directly impacts the state. Bulletins are published weekly during sessions of Congress, and occasionally during other periods.

**AGRICULTURE: HOUSE DEFEATS FARM BILL**

By a vote of 195-234, the House on June 20, 2013 voted down H.R. 1947, the five year reauthorization of the Farm Bill. The vote came after a week of wading through consideration of about a hundred amendments, most of which were defeated. However, on final passage House Democrats, joined by 62 Republicans, brought the bill down; only 24 Democrats supported the bill. The majority of Democrats strenuously objected to the cuts in social programs, such as SNAP, whereas the Republicans argued that the bill did not go far enough to reduce federal spending on farm and social programs.

The bill would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by $20.5 billion. In addition, an amendment was added to the bill that would have placed work requirements on people receiving SNAP benefits.

The House was also unable to move a Farm Bill last year, allowing it to die without floor action. The Senate has passed its own Farm Bill, S. 954, on June 10th by a vote of 66 to 27. See, http://www.calinst.org/bul2/b2017.pdf.

For more information on the House bill, go to: http://agriculture.house.gov.

**EDUCATION: HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS NCLB REPLACEMENT**

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce voted 23 to 16 on Wednesday, June 19, 2013 to advance the Student Success Act (H.R. 5). SSA is intended to overhaul the controversial 2001 education law known as No Child Left Behind (PL 107-110), which expired in 2007. The SSA would reduce the federal government's role in the public education system.

Specifically, SSA would accomplish the following:

- The proposal would eliminate the current accountability system, called adequate yearly progress, which requires all students to be 100 percent proficient in reading and math for their grade...
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For more information, go to: Safe Schools Act Text and Summaries, Education and Workforce Committee, http://edworkforce.house.gov/studentsuccessact/

**Immigration: House Judiciary Advances Two Immigration Bills**

On June 18, 2013, the House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 2278, The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act (SAFE) Act, by a party-line vote of 20-15. The bill addresses border security and interior enforcement issues. On June 19, 2013, the Committee then reported a second bill, H.R. 1773, the Agricultural Guestworker (AG) Act by a vote of 20-16. Rather than consider a “comprehensive” bill, as the Senate is doing, Chairman Bob Goodlatte has said the Committee will deal with immigration and border security issues in separate bills.

Provisions in the SAFE Act include:
- granting states and localities specific congressional authorization to enforce federal immigration law. It also allows states and localities to enact and enforce their own immigration laws as long as they are consistent with federal law. In addition, the bill withholds specific grants from sanctuary cities that resist federal immigration enforcement efforts.
- makes it a federal crime to be in the United States illegally.
- bars foreign terrorists or removable immigrants who threaten national security from receiving immigration benefits, such as naturalization and discretionary relief from removal, among other things.

The bill also requires that no immigration benefits can be provided to immigrants until all required background and security checks are completed.
allows state and local authorities to hold a suspected undocumented immigrant for two weeks.
prohibits the Departments of Interior and Agriculture from preventing Border Patrol agents access to federal lands within 100 miles of the border, and prohibits the interference of Border Patrol activities, such as construction and maintenance of roads and barriers, use of patrol vehicles, and deployment of tactical infrastructure.
expands to additional locations the Visa Security Program, which deploys Homeland Security agents to diplomatic posts worldwide to conduct visa security activities, such as examining visa applications for fraud.
expands the authority of ICE agents to make arrests for immigration violations and allows them to carry firearms. It also would provide ICE agents with body armor.
requires a report to Congress each year on the abuse of prosecutorial discretion by the Administration.
Provisions in the AG Act include:
- creates a new temporary agricultural guestworker program (H-2C) to replace the current H-2A program, which would allow up to 500,000 agriculture workers annually. Under the new program, ten percent of the wages paid to each guestworker would be withheld during their employment and refunded to them in their home country after the end of their employment contract and upon leaving the United States.
- undocumented ag workers currently in the U.S. would be eligible to apply for an H-2C visa, but would have to leave the country for three months before being readmitted under an H-2C visa.
- reduces the regulations imposed on farmers hiring guestworkers.
- allows growers to require as a condition of employment that guestworkers give up the right to sue and instead agree to binding arbitration and mediation of any grievances in relation to the employment relationship.
- sets workers’ wages at either the prevailing wage rate or the state minimum wage – whichever is greater, and eliminates the requirement that growers provide housing and transportation to workers.
- prohibits guestworkers from receiving federal benefits, such as health care, the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and other welfare programs.
- designates the Department of Agriculture to administer the new program rather than the Department of Labor.
The Committee is expected to consider more immigration-related bills in the near future. A bipartisan group of other House members is also working on a comprehensive immigration package.

IMMIGRATION: SENATE CONTINUES CONSIDERATION OF IMMIGRATION REFORM PACKAGE; DEAL ON BORDER SECURITY ANNOUNCED

The Senate continued to wade through amendments on S. 744, the Border Security Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act, during the week of June 17, 2013. In a development that could give the bill a big boost toward bipartisan final passage, two Senators on Thursday, June 20th, announced a negotiated deal to enhance border security in the bill. Sens. John Hoeven (ND) and Bob Corker (TN) will offer an amendment that would add 20,000 border agents, roughly doubling the current number. It also would provide more money to purchase and use the latest technology, such as drones, cameras, and infrared sensors, to secure the border and prevent illegal crossings. The amendment also calls for the completion of 700 miles of double fencing and other structures on the
southern border. Overall, $30 billion would be authorized to pay for the increased costs of agents and materiel. Doubling the number of agents would allow one agent to stand guard every 1,000 feet along the Mexican border, according to the amendment’s supporters.

The amendment also calls for a 90 percent apprehension rate at the border, but does not make that a hard requirement before undocumented immigrants in the United States can begin the process to adjust to legal status (the “path to citizenship”). However, the additional border agents and security measures would need to be operational before any currently illegal immigrant could receive a green card.

Members of the bipartisan Gang of Eight, the chief authors of S. 744, with whom Hoeven and Corker negotiated, quickly voiced their support for the amendment. A vote on the amendment, which is being called “the border surge,” it may occur on Monday night, June 24th.

In earlier votes this week, the Senate defeated other amendments to increase border security that would have also imposed more stringent requirements on measuring success and making the path to citizenship contingent on that success.

The bill also received another boost this week when the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office scored the bill as being positive for the economy and deficit reduction. It found that over 10 years S. 744 would reduce the deficit by $197 billion – and over 20 years the savings would be about $700 billion. However, CBO also estimated that the bill would only reduce illegal immigration by about 25 percent.

**APPROPRIATIONS: SENATE APPROPRIATIONS REPORTS FY 2014 AGRICULTURE BILL; FULL COMMITTEE SETS 302(b) ALLOCATION**

The Senate Committee on Appropriations approved its FY 2014 funding for Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies on June 20, 2013, by a vote of 23-6. The bill provides $20.9 billion in total funding; increasing funding by $420 million more than the fiscal 2013-enacted level, not including cuts triggered by sequestration. The measure would provide $2.6 billion for the FDA, about $96 million more than in fiscal 2013. The allocation would include an increase of $53 million to continue implementation of the 2011 food safety overhaul (PL 111-353).

Bill highlights include:

**Rural Development**
- Rental Assistance - $1.015 billion, which is $135 million above fiscal year 2013. This increase will fund about 30,000 additional rental assistance agreements that will expire in fiscal year 2014.
- Single Family Housing Direct Loans - A loan level of $900 million, which is $24.4 million above fiscal year 2013.
- Water and Waste Disposal Program - A total loan and grant program level of $1.734 billion, which is almost $240 million above fiscal year 2013.

**Public Health**
- Food and Drug Administration - $2.552 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which is $96 million above fiscal year 2013. This includes increases of $53 million to continue implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act and $19 million for improvements to medical product safety. The bill also provides full collection authority for all authorized user fees.
- Food Safety and Inspection Service - $1.02 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which is $7 million below fiscal year 2013, but $12 million above the budget request. This includes full funding for all federal, state and international inspection services.
Food Aid
- Food for Peace - $1.466 billion for PL 480 title II grants, which is $33 million above fiscal year 2013. The bill eliminates approximately 17% of monetization ($20 million) and allows more flexibility for administrative activities for development programs. The bill also includes an increase of $18 million for emergency purposes.
- McGovern-Dole - $185 million for the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program, which is $1 million above fiscal year 2013. This program provides school feeding and promotes education, child development, and food security for some of the world's poorest children.

Nutrition
- WIC Program - $7.070 billion, which is $215 million above fiscal year 2013. This amount will fully fund participation. The bill also includes $50 million for breastfeeding support initiatives; $14 million for infrastructure; and $30 million for management information systems.
- School Meals Equipment Grants - $35 million for equipment purchases in school cafeterias.
- Other nutrition programs - Full funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Research
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS) - $1.123 billion for ARS, which is $51 million above fiscal year 2013.
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) - $1.278 billion for NIFA, which is $75 million above fiscal year 2013. This amount includes increases of $26 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, $14 million for Hatch Act funding, and $14 million for Smith-Lever funding.

Farm Services
- Farm Service Agency (FSA) - $1.176 billion for the Farm Service Agency, which is the same as fiscal year 2013. This bill also includes funding to support $2.575 billion in farm ownership loans, which is an increase of $613 million above fiscal year 2013, and $2.724 billion in farm operating loans, which is an increase of $243 million over fiscal year 2013. These levels are expected to fully fund the demand for these loan programs.

Regulatory Programs
- Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS) - $825.8 million for APHIS, which is $3.9 million above fiscal year 2013. Funding includes the $20 million request to implement a nationwide program to control and eradicate feral swine.

Conservation
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - $818.4 million for NRCS, which is $10 million above fiscal year 2013 to provide technical assistance to agricultural producers.

For more information, go to: Summary of FY 2014 Agriculture Appropriations Bill Draft, Senate Appropriations Committee - Subcommittee on Agriculture, June 18, 2013, http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news.cfm?method=news.view&id=a698771a-2052-4f8e-b34a-5404cc6345d8

On June 20, 2013, the full Appropriations passed on a 15-14 vote, its 302b allocations setting total appropriations funding for FY 2014. The Committee approved a $1.058 trillion level, which is in line with the total adopted in the Senate-passed FY14 budget resolution (S Con Res 8).

APPROPRIATIONS: HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS FY 2014 TRANSPORTATION-HUD FUNDING

The House Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies advanced by voice vote a $44.1 billion Transportation-HUD spending bill on Wednesday, June 19, 2013. That funding level would be $7.7 billion, or about 15 percent, less than the fiscal 2013 enacted level and $4.4 billion, or about 9 percent, less than the current post-sequestration level. The measure would provide $13.9 billion less than the President's request. The full committee is expected to mark up the measure on June 27.

Bill highlights include:

Transportation - $15.3 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Transportation for fiscal year 2014. This is $2.6 billion (-15%) below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and $7.4 billion below the President's request.

TIGER Grants - The bill zero funds the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants program and rescinds $237 million in FY13 funding. FY13, pre-sequestration, funding was $500 million and the President’s FY14 budget requested $4 billion in funding for the program.

Safety - $828 million in both mandatory and discretionary funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an increase of $7.5 million over the fiscal year 2013 enacted level; and $572 million for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, an increase of $11 million above the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. Also included is a $231,000 increase over the fiscal year 2013 level for the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

Highways - Nearly $41 billion from the Highway Trust Fund to be spent on the Federal Highway program – the same level authorized in the MAP-21 transportation authorization legislation, which expires on September 30, 2014. This is an increase of $557 million from the fiscal year 2013 level.

Air - $11.8 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), $756 million below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and $103.3 million below the level caused by automatic sequestration cuts. The bill preserves funding for the FAA's Next Generation Air Transportation Systems (NextGen) that are under current deployment.

Rail - $1.16 billion, a reduction of $468 million below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. The bill also includes policy reforms for Amtrak, such as requiring overtime limits on Amtrak employees, and prohibiting federal funding for routes where Amtrak offers a discount of 50% or more off normal, peak fares. No funding is provided for High Speed Rail.

Transit - Nearly $2 billion for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which is $329.7 million below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. The legislation also allows $8.6 billion in state and local transit grant funding from the Mass Transit Account (of the Highway Trust Fund), consistent with MAP-21.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - $28.5 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a decrease of $5 billion (-15%) below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and $3 billion below the level caused by sequestration.

Section 8 and Public Housing - $24.9 billion for Public and Indian Housing. This is a decrease of $953 million below last year's level and $2.8 billion below the President's request. The bill fully funds the President's request for veterans' housing vouchers at $75 million. Other housing programs within the bill are funded at $9.6 billion - a reduction of $324 million below last year's level and $1.3 billion below the President's request. Within this total, the bill provides $126 million for housing for the disabled and $374.6 million for housing for the elderly – the same levels as the President's request.
**Community Planning and Development** - The bill contains $4.8 billion for Community Planning and Development programs – a cut of $1.9 billion below last year's level and $1.6 billion below the level caused by sequestration. The Community Development Block Grant formula program is funded at $1.6 billion – a decrease of $1.3 billion below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level.


**APPROPRIATIONS: HOUSE ENERGY & WATER SUBCOMMITTEE ADVANCES FY14 FUNDING BILL**

On June 18, 2013, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water approved by voice vote its funding bill for FY 2014. The bill totals $30.4 billion – a cut of $2.9 billion below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and a reduction of $4.1 billion compared to the President’s request. This level is approximately $700 million below the level caused by sequestration for these programs.

Bill highlights include:

**Army Corps of Engineers** – The Corps is funded at $4.9 billion, a decrease of $104 million (-2%) below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and $50 million above the President’s budget request. Within the total, the bill provides $285 million for flood control and navigation projects, and $2 billion for navigation projects and studies, including $1 billion in funding from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. The bill also funds flood and storm damage reduction activities at $1.4 billion – including $274 million for critical dam safety improvements.

**Energy Programs** – Funding for energy programs within the Department of Energy (DOE) is cut by $1.4 billion below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. The bill includes $450 million for research and development to advanced coal, natural gas, oil, and other fossil energy technologies. The bill also includes $656 million for nuclear energy research, development, and demonstration activities. Renewable energy programs are funded at $983 million – a cut of $911 million (-50%) below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) program is reduced by $215 million (-81%).

**Science Research** – The bill includes $4.7 billion for science research – a cut of $223 million below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level. The bill, however, restores some funding cuts to the fusion energy program proposed by the Administration.

**Bureau of Reclamation** - The legislation contains $965 million – $104 million below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level and $85 million below the President’s request for the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation. This funding is intended to help manage, develop, and protect the water resources of western states.

**Environmental Cleanup** – Included in the legislation is $5.5 billion for environmental management activities, $243 million (-4%) below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level, and an increase of approximately $185 million (+3.5%) compared to the sequestration level. This amount includes $4.75 billion for Defense Environmental Cleanup to safely clean sites contaminated by previous nuclear weapons production.

ENERGY: HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE SUBCOMMITTEE EXAMINES LNG EXPORTS

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Energy and Power met on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 to examine barriers to exporting coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States. These barriers come from a variety of sources, ranging from permitting requirements for facilities and for the actual commodity itself to market forces that will dictate the viability and scale of export of these commodities. Moreover, the panel heard testimony on the impact these barriers have on the export of coal and LNG and what role, if any, Congress should play in removing or amending these barriers.

Witnesses included: Panel I: Mr. Christopher A. Smith, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Acting Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy, U.S. Department of Energy; Mr. Jeff C. Wright, Director, Office of Energy Projects, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; and Ms. Jennifer Moyer, Acting Chief, Regulatory Program, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Panel II: Mr. Bill Cooper, President, The Center for Liquefied Natural Gas; Mr. Ross E. Eisenberg, Vice President, Energy and Resources Policy, National Association of Manufacturers; Mr. Lucian Pugliaresi, President, Energy Policy Research Foundation, Inc.; Mr. Harold P. Quinn, President and CEO, National Mining Association; Mr. Mike McGinn, Mayor, City of Seattle; and Mr. KC Golden, Policy Director, Climate Solutions.

Mr. Smith testified as to the DOE’s statutory authority, its process to review applications to export LNG to non-free trade agreement countries, its two-part LNG export study, the comments received on those studies, and other recent developments. As of June 7, 2013, DOE has approved 24 long-term applications to export lower-48 LNG to free trade agreement countries equivalent to 29.41 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas from 21 new liquefaction facilities. In addition, DOE has three long-term applications pending to export lower-48 LNG to free trade agreement countries.

Mr. Wright discussed the role of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as an environmental and safety regulatory agency that does not authorize the import or the export of LNG as a commodity; that authority is retained by the DOE.

Ms. Moyer discussed the Army Corps of Engineers’ regulatory authorities under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Specifically, she discussed the Corps' role in the permitting of shipping facilities, with a focus on coal and the issues currently being discussed in the Pacific Northwest.

Mr. Cooper argued that the DOE’s issuance of its order of precedence informing the public as to the manner in which it would process the 15 applications pending before it, and all subsequently filed applications, was unlawful. He supported this argument with the following legal rationale: (1) notice of the queue was not published in the Federal Register with an opportunity for the public to comment, which in effect renders the queue void; (2) any amendment to an existing rule cannot be applied retroactively, thus rendering the queue ineffective as to the 15 pending applications at the time of the queue's issuance; (3) DOE should proceed with its determinations of the pending applications based upon its rules; and (4) DOE should proceed with its determinations of the pending applications within a reasonable time from the closing of the time periods set forth in the Federal Register.

For more information, go to:
DEFENSE: HOUSE PASSES FY 2014 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

The House passed H.R.1960, the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act bill (NDAA), 315-108 on Friday, June 14, 2013. The bill authorizes $638.4 billion for discretionary and mandatory "defense" programs in fiscal 2014, with $85.8 billion of that designated for overseas contingency operations – $5 billion more than President Obama requested for the war in Afghanistan and the general war on terrorism. The bill would dramatically exceed the $498 billion defense spending cap set under sequestration, but would abide by the overall $966 billion limit. The White House issued a veto threat against the House bill in its current form. Please see the June 6, 2013 bulletin for a summary of the NDAA prior to passage by the full House (http://www.calinst.org/bul2/b2016.shtml#TOC1_5)

Notable revisions since June 6, 2013 include:

- The bill would require the Secretary of Defense to outline military options for removing Syrian President Assad from power, including the establishment of a no-fly zone, arming the Free Syrian Army with heavy military equipment and conducting limited airstrikes against runways and other infrastructure.

- Lawmakers adopted 214-211 a Rep. Robert Goodlatte (VA) amendment that would require the government, in habeas corpus proceedings for U.S. citizens apprehended in the United States under the AUMF, to prove by "clear and convincing evidence" that the citizen is an unprivileged enemy combatant and that there is no presumption that the government's evidence is accurate and authentic.

- The NDAA would prohibit reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal below 800 missiles unless the President certifies that Russia is likewise in compliance with its nuclear arms control obligations, and unless the President has "high confidence" in intelligence community judgments on the nuclear forces of China. Additionally, the House adopted a Rep. Michael Turner (OH) amendment that would require the President to provide Congress with details on any proposed deal with Russia on U.S. missile defense or nuclear arms.

- In a 305-121 vote, the House also adopted an amendment by Rep. Jim McGovern (MA) that would make it U.S. policy to transfer combat operations to Afghanistan by the end of 2013 and other military and security operations by the end of 2014, officially ending the war. The amendment also would require the administration to pursue negotiations to address the security and stability of Afghanistan and the broader region. Lastly, the amendment would express the sense of Congress that if Obama determines the need to deploy U.S. troops in Afghanistan after 2014, Congress should vote on authorizing military action no later than June 2014.

- A Rep. Turner amendment, which was adopted by voice vote, would establish mandatory minimum sentences for sexual assaults.

For more information, go to:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.uscongress/legislation.113hr1960

NATIONAL SECURITY: HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE EXAMINES TWIC PROGRAM

The House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security met on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 to discuss and examine the future of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. The TWIC program is part of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), which requires a secure credential for individuals who require routine unescorted access to maritime ports and vessels. Discussion revolved around problems, concerns, and issues arising from TWIC pilot programs.
Witnesses included: Rear Admiral Joseph A. Servidio, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy, U.S. Coast Guard; Mr. Steve Sadler, Assistant Administrator, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Transportation Security Administration; Mr. Stephen M. Lord, Director, Forensic Audits and Investigative Services, U.S. Government Accountability Office; and Captain Marcus Woodring, USCG (ret), Managing Director, Health, Safety, Security, and Environmental, Port of Houston Authority.

Rear Admiral Servidio testified as to the benefits of the TWIC program in improving access control at vessels and maritime facilities, including the benefit of security standardization at MTSA-regulated facilities, and the March 22, 2013 release of the TWIC Reader Requirements Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, which outlines visual inspection criteria and the use of biometric electronic readers.

Mr. Sadler testified as to the "OneVisit" initiative, which will facilitate card issuance to eligible applicants and individuals needing a replacement TWIC. The "OneVisit" program will allow applicants to apply for and obtain a TWIC with a single visit to an enrollment center and will begin as a pilot program in Alaska in the summer of 2013. Mr. Sadler also testified as to the analysis of the TWIC Reader Pilot program, which concluded that TWIC reader systems function properly when designed, installed, and operated consistent with the needs of the facility or vessel.

Mr. Lord testified to the GAO's May 2013 report, which identified several challenges related to the TWIC Reader Pilot program results. Mr. Lord indicated that the Department of Homeland Security did not correct planning shortfalls and insufficiently collected reader pilot data, thus undermining validity of results and reporting. He also reiterated GAO's recommendation that Congress require the Secretary of Homeland Security to complete an assessment evaluating the effectiveness of TWIC with readers for enhancing port security.

Captain Woodring testified as to his experiences with the TWIC readers at the Port of Houston, including perceived benefits of the TWIC program, the flaws with the TWIC enrollment and issuance process including lengthy appointment times and gaps between enrollment and issuance, and the inclusion of only serious crimes in the background checks that are undertaken as part of the TWIC application process. Captain Woodring also testified to the need for additional regulations for the determination of what constitutes a "valid business reason" to gain access to secure port facilities and vessels.

For more information please visit: http://homeland.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-threat-risk-and-vulnerability-future-twic-program

**HEALTH: SENATE FINANCE HOLDS HEARING ON HEALTH CARE COSTS**

The Senate Committee on Finance met on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 to examine increased transparency in health care pricing as a means to achieving a higher quality and more affordable health care system. Witnesses and lawmakers also debated how much of an effect the 2010 health care law has had on improving price transparency and getting better costs for consumers.

Witnesses included: Mr. Steven Brill, J.D., Contributing Editor, TIME, New York, NY; Dr. Suzanne Delbanco, Executive Director, Catalyst for Payment Reform, San Francisco, CA; Dr. Paul Ginsburg, President, Center for Studying Health System Change, Washington, DC; and Dr. Giovanni Colella, CEO and Co-Founder, Castlight Health, San Francisco, CA.

Witnesses told the Senate Finance Committee that while lawmakers should encourage more transparency on health care pricing, they also must find ways for consumers to use that information to save money and still obtain quality health care.
Dr. Delbanco encouraged lawmakers to push some providers to be more transparent. Some providers prevent health plans from sharing their cost information, while some health plans say that information on what they pay providers is proprietary, she warned. Having that information can help purchasers design benefit structures that encourage beneficiaries to get the highest-value care.

Dr. Colella discussed the current issues surrounding the dissemination of high quality and useful data on hospitals and health care services. His company helps consumers to assess prices using Medicare data and numerous peer-reviewed, public and private measures. He asserted several policy prescriptions for improving health care, including: (1) ensuring that transparency on claims data is publically available, with privacy protections, for utilizing and quality measurement; (2) the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should continue making its data available to the public; (3) relaxing federal data restrictions on access to Medicare data without compromising safeguards to protect privacy; (4) ensuring purchasers of health care have unfettered access to their claims data to enable price and quality transparency initiatives; and (5) pro-transparency measures, such as those in Massachusetts, should be passed by other states, or by the Congress, to prevent providers from restricting access to pricing data.

For more information, go to:
http://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=12b343eb-5056-a032-525a-bfdd0e908a37

HEALTH: SENATE HELP SUBCOMMITTEE EXAMINES SENIOR POVERTY AND HUNGER

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging met on Wednesday, June 19, 2013 to discuss the status of older Americans and the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. In the United States today, half of all seniors are unable to afford even basic living expenses, with four million seniors living on less than $11,000 per year, according to Committee documents. The Older Americans Act, signed into law in 1965, provides federal funding for many essential services for seniors, with 40% of funding supporting nutrition and meal programs. Hearing discussion targeted inadequate funding and sequestration, the economic status of the elderly, and the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2013.

Witnesses included: Nancy J. Almtan, Director, Social Security Works and Chairman, Board of Directors, Pension Rights Center; Ellie Hollander, President and C.E.O., Meals on Wheels Association of America; Howard Bedlin, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy, National Council on Aging; Paul Downey, President and C.E.O., Senior Community Centers and President, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Program, San Diego, CA.

Mr. Paul Downey testified on the necessity of proper nutrition for seniors, which provides seniors with independence, reduces preventable visits to the emergency room, and diminishes the need for long-term care. Mr. Downey provided a description of services provided by the Senior Community Centers in San Diego County, which support the elderly through home-delivered meals, case management, chronic disease management, healthcare education, civic engagement, and the ability for seniors to participate and interact in a positive and social way. Mr. Downey also testified as to the relatively low costs of providing proper nutrition, with an estimated $2,000 spent annually to provide meals to seniors compared to the high-costs of hospital and emergency room visits.

For more information, please visit:
http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=3c8e964e-5056-a032-52bd-ff9c57dde2e7