APPROPRIATIONS: HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE APPROVES FY15 COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE FUNDING

On April 30, 2014 the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science approved by voice vote its Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations bill. The bill funds the Department of Commerce, the Department of Justice, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other related agencies.

The bill contains $51.2 billion in total discretionary funding. This is a reduction of $398 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level.

Highlights of the bill include:

Department of Justice (DOJ) – The bill funds DOJ at $27.8 billion, an increase of $383 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. That funding includes a total of $2.1 billion for various grant programs, a reduction of $73 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This includes:

- $425.5 million for Violence Against Women programs;
- $376 million for Byrne Justice Assistance Grants;
- $210 million for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. Funding for the program in FY14 was $180 million. California historically receives about 40 percent of the funds.
- $45.4 million for Victims of Trafficking grants; and
- $67 million for missing and exploited children programs.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) – NASA is funded at $17.9 billion in the bill, which is $250 million above the 2014 enacted level. This funding includes:

- $4.2 billion for Exploration – $54 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This includes funding to keep NASA on schedule for upcoming Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle and Space Launch System flight program milestones, and to continue progress in the commercial crew program.
- $5.2 billion for NASA Science programs – $42 million above the 2014 enacted level.

Department of Commerce – The bill includes $8.35 billion for the Commerce Department, which is an increase of $171 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and a decrease of $395
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- San Bernardino Valley MWD
- The Energy Foundation
- University of Southern California

MaryBeth Sullivan
Executive Director

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On April 29, 2014, the Horticulture, Research, Biotechnology and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing on current research and application management strategies to control pests and diseases of pollinators. Mainly, witnesses focused on the alarming decline in the U.S. population of honeybees, the most important of insect pollinators. Bees pollinate more than 90 crops across the U.S. and are responsible for $15-20 billion in added crop value, as measured by crop yield and quality, and are particularly important to the vitality of the almond market, California’s number one agricultural export. Over half the nation’s bees are needed just to pollinate almond orchards, a $6 billion industry in California that is responsible for over 80% of the world supply. Almonds are primarily grown in central California in a 400-mile area from Red Bluff, in the north, to Bakersfield, in the south.

Witnesses included: Dr. Jeff Pettis, Research Leader, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Beltsville, Maryland; Mr. Dan Cummings, CFO, Olivarz Honey Bees, and CEO, Capay Farms, Chico, California; Mr. Jeff Stone, Executive Director and CEO, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Wilsonville, Oregon; and Dr. David L. Fischer, Director, Pollinator Safety & Manager, Bayer North American Bee Care Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

Recent annual surveys of the U.S. honeybee population highlight the need for effective measures to promote bee health. While colony losses of 10-15% are not unusual following the winter season,
surveys show that average losses are now around 30 percent. A number of contributing factors are responsible for this decline, but according to Dr. Pettis of the USDA and Dr. Fischer of the Bayer North American Bee Care Center, the main threat to honeybees is a pest known as the Varroa mite. Understanding the impact of this parasite and how to best manage its destructive potential is the key challenge for industry stakeholders. “The costs of mite controls and replacing hives that only live 1-2 years, as opposed to living 3-5 years before the arrival of Varroa, are all accumulating to the point where varroa mites are making beekeeping no longer financially viable in this country,” noted Dr. Pettis. “The beekeeper’s best hope is research that can build better tools to reduce the size of the varroa mite problem. Researchers at USDA’s scientific agencies – the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) – are on that trail right now. In ARS, scientists are working with a total budget of approximately $11 million dollars in FY2014, with approximately $3 million targeting Varroa specifically. Additional temporary funding of $1.3 million in 2013 has been provided on bee health through the Areawide Program of ARS. These funds have helped augment the base funds and allow scientists to work closely with commercial beekeepers to try and improve colony survival. The work at USDA is part of a government-wide response to the large and ongoing declines in pollinator populations in the U.S. and world-wide. The President’s FY 2015 budget proposes over $71 million for USDA alone to focus on this issue. This includes a $25 million initiative to create an Innovation Institute on Pollination and Pollinator Health, a competitive program that will be managed by NIFA.”

Mr. Cummings of Capay Farms outlined at length how California almond growers are leading investment in honeybee research, including honeybee nutrition, improved honeybee genetics, the effective management of pests and diseases, and the impact of pesticides. “The Almond Board of California has funded honeybee research beginning in 1976. Since 1995, it has invested $2.3 million in honeybee health research. As a grower-owned cooperative, Blue Diamond Growers is the largest single contributor to the Almond Board of California. Project Apis m. has invested over $2.2 million on behalf of honeybees,” he testified. Other industry initiatives were discussed, including a $2.4 million facility started by Bayer's Bee Care Program that houses a full laboratory and research apiary and other spaces dedicated to pollinator research, education and training. Dr. Fischer emphasized “it is only through a collaborative effort involving government, university research, private industry, commercial beekeepers and farmers that we can hope to protect this vital resource and ensure that American agriculture remains the envy of the world.”

For more information, please visit:

**DISASTERS: HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE REVIEW PREPAREDNESS GRANT PROGRAM**

The Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications Subcommittee of the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing on April 29, 2014 to discuss stakeholder assessments of the Administration's National Preparedness Grant Program (NPG) proposal. The NPG was proposed several years ago, but just recently the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released an authorization bill to outline specifically how the various programs would be changed and outline in more detail how the new program would work. Both of the witnesses from California, Mr. Metcalf and Mr. Parsons, expressed concerns on behalf of their respective organizations over the proposal in its current form.

Witnesses included: William R. Metcalf, Fire Chief, North County Fire Protection District, State of California, representing International Association of Fire Chiefs; Randy Parsons, Director of
Security, Port of Long Beach, Calif., representing American Association of Port Authorities; Kris Eide, Director, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, State of Minnesota, representing National Emergency Management Association, National Governors Association, and National Emergency Management Association and National Governors Association; Steven M. Fulop, Mayor, Jersey City, N.J.; and Troy Riggs, Director, Department of Public Safety, City of Indianapolis.

On behalf of the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), Mr. Parsons testified that funding determinations for the Port Security Grant Program should remain at the federal level, rather than shifting that authority to the state level as the FEMA proposal calls for. Moving Port Security Grants to the state level would likely result in a significant decrease in security funds going to seaports, and ultimately putting our nation at greater risk, argued Mr. Parsons. "The Maritime Transportation Security Act, passed soon after 9/11, and the subsequent SAFE Port Act carefully laid out a system to identify risks and fund projects accordingly, with both national and local input. FEMA, with input from the U.S. Coast Guard and national intelligence information determines which ports should be in each risk category and the local area committees develop plans to decrease these risks. State officials are invited to sit on these local area committees, but the responsibility to determine who gets a grant resides with the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, based on evaluation from the local and national U.S. Coast Guard offices, FEMA and other federal partners," he explained. "Seaports are international borders and must comply with numerous federal regulations including those instituted by TSA, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Port Security Grants are often used to help facilities address these federal mandates. Often states are not even aware of these requirements and do not have the expertise to determine risks to these international seaport borders. AAPA strongly believes that the responsibility for the grants should stay at the federal level, since border security (land, air and maritime) is a national, not a state, responsibility."

Mr. Metcalf, on behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, also expressed concerns about the "state-centric" approach to administering grant programs for emergency preparedness. "My agency is located immediately adjacent to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, and it responded to the massive fires in southern California in 2003 and 2007. Using the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), we were able to improve regional radio interoperability and develop resilient internal communications, improve the security of our fire stations and train our chiefs and company officers to lead in large-scale and complex incidents," he testified. "One of our greatest concerns is that the NPG still continues to rely on the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) to identify risk, threats and vulnerabilities and to allocate funding. Throughout the nation, local involvement in the state THIRAs is sporadic. For example, I have not been involved or consulted in the California THIRA. Local officials and first responders best know the emergency response capabilities and risks to their communities. THIRAs will continue to be flawed without active local involvement. In addition, we remain concerned that the NPG program focuses on increasing the state administration of the FEMA grants. In many urban areas, the preparedness system relies upon a multistate, multidisciplinary approach. By focusing on a state-based system, the NPG creates stovepipes where current cooperation exists...While the proposal would create links between the Urban Area Working Groups and the State Administrative Agencies, we are concerned that the NPG's state-centric approach will build barriers between multistate regions."

For more information on stakeholder concerns, please visit:
http://homeland.house.gov/hearing/stakeholder-assessments-administration-s-national-preparedness-grant-program-proposal
RESOURCES: HOUSE COMMITTEE MARKS UP ESA BILLS

On April 30, 2014 the House Natural Resources Committee convened to mark up four bills that would amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA): H.R. 4315, H.R. 4316, H.R. 4317, and H.R. 4318. All four bills were favorably reported to the House.

H.R. 4315, or the 21st Century Endangered Species Transparency Act, would amend the ESA to require publication on the Internet of the basis for determinations that species are endangered or threatened. An amendment offered by Chairman Doc Hastings (OR) was agreed to by voice vote. The bill was adopted as amended by a roll call vote of 17 yeas and 15 nays.

H.R. 4316, or the Endangered Species Recovery Transparency Act, would amend the ESA to change the disclosure of certain expenditures under the ESA. An amendment offered by Rep. Cynthia Lummis (WY) was agreed to by a roll call vote of 22 yeas and 16 nays. The bill was adopted as amended by a roll call vote of 26 yeas and 16 nays.

H.R. 4317, or the State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act, would amend the ESA to require disclosure to States of the basis of determinations under the Act, to ensure use of information provided by State, tribal, and county governments in decision-making under the Act. An amendment offered by Rep. Jared Huffman (Marin) was not agreed to by voice vote. The bill was adopted without the amendment by a roll call vote of 26 yeas and 16 nays.

H.R. 4318, or the “Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act”, would amend the ESA to conform citizen suits under that Act with other existing law. An amendment offered by Rep. Huffman was ruled out of order. The bill was adopted by a roll call vote of 27 yeas and 15 nays.

For more information and the full text of these bills, please visit: http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=377512

SPACE: HOUSE SCIENCE COMMITTEE APPROVES NASA AUTHORIZATION

The House Science, Space and Technology Committee on April 29, 2014 approved H.R. 4412, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Authorization Act, by voice vote with the adoption of a bipartisan amendment by Rep. Donna Edwards (MD) and Rep. Steven Palazzo (MI) authorizing FY2014 appropriations for programs, activities, and reports respecting NASA.

These include programs relating to human exploration of space, the Space Launch System, the Orion multipurpose crew vehicle, the commercial crew program, the International Space Station (ISS), and many other programs. Aeronautics research, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs are also authorized under the bill. H.R. 4412 also reaffirms the importance of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, as well as establishes a space technology program. The bill also directs the NASA Administrator to utilize the International Space Station and commercial services for Science Mission Directorate and Space Technology Demonstration missions in low-Earth orbit wherever it is practical and cost effective to do so.

Additionally, the bill directs the Administrator to: (1) enter into an arrangement with the National Academies for a review of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, and (2) revise the NASA Supplement to the Federal Acquisition Regulation to address the detection and avoidance of counterfeit electronic parts.

For more information, please visit: http://science.house.gov/markup/subcommittee-space-markup-hr-national-aeronautics-and-space-administration-authorization-act
**ECONOMY: HOUSE RESOURCES FOCUSES ON SKILLED JOBS IN ENERGY**

On April 29, 2014, the House Natural Resources Committee held an oversight hearing titled "American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Skilled Trades Workers." This hearing focused on the well-paying job opportunities for technical and skilled workers created by the recent American energy boom. Unemployment in the United States remains at 6.7 percent, whereas states like North Dakota with a flourishing energy sector has unemployment at 2.7 percent. Skilled trades workers are an integral part of employment in the energy sector and their importance will only continue to grow as American energy production expands. Chairman Hastings noted in his opening statements that “this increase [of American energy production] is entirely taking place on private and state lands and not federal lands. Energy production on federal lands is, in fact, languishing, instead of booming,” citing a Congressional Research Service report released last week that showed oil production on federal lands fell by 11 percent, and natural gas production has decreased 28 percent under the current administration.

Witnesses included: Mike Rowe, CEO, mikeroweWORKS Foundation; Robert Flurer, Vice President, Skeels Electric Company; Sean McGarvey, President, North America's Building Trades Unions; and Monica Martinez, President and Secretary, Hispanics in Energy.

Monica Martinez, President of Hispanics in Energy, described her organization's role in engaging Hispanics and other diverse communities in the nation’s energy policy dialogue and workforce. She noted that 2013 marked her organization's inaugural year during which they held two policy summits—one in Sacramento, California, and one in Washington, D.C. This year, the organization has focused on jobs in energy and bringing a “community conversation” on workforce preparedness to cities across the country. “The Hispanic population in the United States is over 53 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation’s largest ethnic or racial minority – 17 percent of the nation’s total population...Today, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Texas all have a population of 1 million or more Hispanic residents. At 11.6 million Hispanic family households, we comprise roughly 10 percent of our nation’s total households. For 2011, the median income of Hispanic households was $38,624, whereas the median income of US households was $51,100. The poverty rate among Hispanics is roughly 25.3 percent, whereas the national poverty rate is less at 16 percent. I did not mention these figures to bring about a discussion of income inequality; rather, I find them useful in the debate when we discuss jobs and economic opportunity. I recognize the best way to help alleviate poverty and to grow household income is to expand the outreach and availability of good paying jobs. For Hispanics, African Americans, women, and all Americans, the access to the economic opportunity in the energy field can be crucial for helping to boost earnings and bring about greater standards of living,” she explained.

Bridging the gap between the availability of skilled workers and the needs of employers in the energy production sector remains an ongoing challenge. The mikeroweWORKS Foundation was founded by Mike Rowe, host of the TV series Dirty Jobs, as a public non-profit that promotes alternative education, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, innovation and U.S. manufacturing in a variety of ways, including tool scholarships, travel stipends, educational scholarships and other financial assistance to those pursuing a skilled trade. He discussed the importance of growing a workforce of skilled laborers to meet the needs of the energy production sector in the U.S., a point that other witnesses reiterated and expanded on. Mr. McGarvey concluded: “North America's Building Trades Unions stand ready to work with this committee and the U.S. Congress to find innovative funding mechanisms, government sponsored or otherwise, sensible regulations and a collaborative tripartite relationship, between government, industry, and labor, to create the platform needed to regain American leadership in the energy industry and put a floor under the middle class while creating millions of jobs.”
CHILDREN: GROWING PROBLEM OF SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN COUNTIES

With growing awareness that human trafficking is not an issue limited to other countries around the world, but is in fact a rampant issue within U.S. borders, the National Association of Counties has conducted a survey of U.S. counties to identify the scope of the commercial exploitation of children under the age of 18 for sex. The findings showed that 86% of the counties with populations greater than 250,000 reported this as a problem, including 48% which reported it was a major problem; about half of the counties with populations between 50,000 and 249,999 reported this as a problem. These findings are based on interviews with county sheriff and police departments.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), sex trafficking is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world. One organization estimates that child sex trafficking in the U.S. is a $9.8 billion industry. However, since these crimes usually occur outside of the public eye, it is difficult to estimate the number of minor victims of sex trafficking. One study estimates that over 290,000 American youth are at risk of becoming a victim of sex trafficking. Additionally, from 2004 through 2008, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force experienced an increase of more than 900 percent in the number of minor sex trafficking complaints.

In a press conference held on April 29, 2014 the Chairman of the Board of Los Angeles County Supervisors Don Knabe confirmed that sex trafficking is of particular concern in large urban counties, and described what Los Angeles has done so far to combat it. In addition to launching a public awareness campaign through the Metropolitan Transit Authority, Los Angeles has also secured a federal grant to train over 5,000 judges, attorneys, community partners, and other stakeholders who are likely to come into contact with victims. The grant also funds a collaborative court to focus specifically on the victims of child sex trafficking by providing them with housing, education, medical, and mental health support services. “While survivor and prevention programs are fundamental,” he noted, “legislative action is necessary to punish the true criminals and defend the victims. I would like to thank Judge Poe for his leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank the California delegation and especially Congresswoman Bass, who have supported key legislation to fight this horrific crime.”

The day after the press conference, April 30, the House Judiciary Committee considered three bills in relation to sex trafficking crimes.

HR 3530, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2013, was reported favorably by voice vote with a Manager's Amendment, as well as two other amendments. The bill amends the federal criminal code to impose an additional penalty of $5,000 on any person or entity convicted of crimes relating to: (1) peonage, slavery, and trafficking in persons; (2) sexual abuse; (3) sexual exploitation and other abuse of children; (4) transportation for illegal sexual activity; or (5) human smuggling in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act. It also provides additional resources to law enforcement via a new, victim-centered grant program and allots funds to provide services for child pornography victims.

HR 3610, the “Stop Exploitation through Trafficking Act of 2013,” was reported favorably by voice vote. The bill requires each state, within three years, to have in effect legislation that: (1) treats a minor who has engaged or attempted to engage in a commercial sex act as a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons, (2) discourages the charging or prosecution of such an individual for a prostitution or sex trafficking offense, and (3) encourages the diversion of such individual to child protective services. It authorizes the Attorney General to withhold specified Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program funds from a state that fails to comply with these requirements. It
amends the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 to require the Secretary of
Health and Human Services to make grants annually for a national communication system to assist
victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons communicating with service providers.

HR 4225, the “Stop Advertising Victims of Exploitation Act of 2014,” was also reported
favorably by a roll call vote of 24 yeas to 3 nays. The bill would amend Title 18 of the U.S.C. to
provide a penalty for knowingly selling advertising that offers certain commercial sex acts.

For more information on the House Judiciary Committee mark up of these three bills, please
visit:
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In related news, on April 29, the House Ways and Means Committee considered HR 4058, a bill
to prevent and address sex trafficking of youth in foster care. The bill was reported favorably as
amended with a roll call vote of 33 yeas to 0 nays. The bill amends part E (foster care and adoption
assistance) of title IV of the Social Security Act to require the state plan for foster care and adoption
assistance to demonstrate that the state has developed policies and procedures for identifying and
screening, and for determining appropriate state action and services with respect to, children over whom
the state has reasonable cause to believe are victims of sex trafficking or a severe form of trafficking in
persons, or are at risk of being such victims.

For more information about HR 4058, please visit: