IMMIGRATION: PRESIDENT OBAMA ASKS CONGRESS FOR $3.7 BILLION FOR BORDER

In response to the massive influx of unaccompanied children and adults with young children at the southern border, President Barack Obama sent a request to Congress on July 8, 2014, requesting emergency funding of $3.7 billion for border actions. The request also includes an additional $615 million for the Department of Agriculture to fight wildfires in the West.

Calling it an “urgent humanitarian situation,” the Administration said efforts across multiple agencies would focus on four primary areas:

- Deterrence, including increased detainment and removal of adults with children and increased immigration court capacity to speed cases;
- Enforcement, including enhanced interdiction and prosecution of criminal networks, increased surveillance, and expanded collaborative law enforcement task force efforts;
- Foreign Cooperation, including improved repatriation and reintegration, stepped-up public information campaigns, and efforts to address the root causes of migration; and
- Capacity, including increased detainment, care, and transportation of unaccompanied children.

The supplemental appropriation broken down below would fund activities at the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Justice (DOJ), State and other International Programs, and Health and Human Services (HHS).

The Department of Homeland Security would receive a total of $1.1 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Of this total:

- $116 million would pay for transportation costs associated with the significant rise in apprehensions of unaccompanied children;
- $109 million would provide for immigration and customs enforcement efforts, including expanding the Border Enforcement Security Task Force program, doubling the size of vetted units in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and expanding investigatory activities by ICE Homeland Security Investigations; and
- $879 million would pay for detention and removal of apprehended undocumented adults traveling with children, expansion of alternatives to detention programs for these individuals, and additional prosecution capacity for adults with children who cross the border illegally.

The Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection would receive $433 million of the emergency funding. Of this total:

- $364 million would pay for operational costs of responding to the significant rise in apprehensions of unaccompanied children and families, including overtime and temporary duty costs for Border Patrol agents, contract services and facility costs to care for children while in CBP custody, and medical and transportation service arrangements;
- $29 million for CBP to expand its role in Border Enforcement Security Task Force programs, increasing information-sharing and collaboration among the participating law enforcement agencies combating transnational crime; and
- $39.4 million to increase air surveillance capabilities that would support 16,526 additional flight hours for border surveillance and 16 additional crews for unmanned aerial systems to improve detection and interdiction of illegal activity.

The Department of Justice would be allocated $64 million. Of the total:

- $45.4 million would be to hire approximately 40 additional immigration judge teams, including those anticipated to be hired on a temporary basis. The funding would also be used to expand courtroom capacity including additional video conferencing and other equipment in support of the additional immigration judge teams. According to the Administration, these additional resources, when combined with the FY 2015 Budget request for 35 additional teams, would provide sufficient capacity to process an additional 55,000 to 75,000 cases annually.
- $2.5 million would be used to expand the legal orientation program that provides assistance to adults and custodians of children in the immigration court system.
- $15 million would be used to provide direct legal representation services to children in immigration proceedings.
- $1.1 million would go to hiring additional immigration litigation attorneys to support Federal agencies involved in detainee admission, regulation, and removal actions.

Under the request, the Department of State and other International Programs would receive $300 million. Included in that funding are the following:

- $295 million to support efforts to repatriate and reintegrate migrants to Central America, to help the governments in the region better control their borders, and to address the underlying root causes driving migration. According to the request, beyond offering initial assistance, continued funding for repatriation and reintegration activities will be contingent on sustained progress and cooperation by the Central American countries.
- $5 million would support State Department media campaigns in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, targeting potential migrants and their families. The campaigns will emphasize the dangers of the journey, deliver the message that unaccompanied children are not given a permit to
stay in the U.S., and highlight a shared community responsibility for the welfare of unaccompanied children. Funds would also support youth programs to develop skills and leadership among potential migrants.

The proposal would provide an additional $1.8 billion for HHS to provide the appropriate care and medical attention, if needed, for unaccompanied children, while maintaining services for refugees.

The Senate Appropriations Committee held a hearing on the President’s request on Thursday, July 10th at which Administrative officials testified. For information on the hearing, go to: http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/ The House has not scheduled a hearing on the request as of this time. House Republican leaders have expressed skepticism over the ability of the request to solve the problem, but Speaker John Boehner (OH) has said that the Appropriations Committee, as well as the Republican working group on immigration issues, will review the request.


**WORKFORCE: HOUSE PASSES WORKFORCE BILL, SENDING IT TO PRESIDENT**

On July 9, 2014, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 803, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), aimed at reforming the nation’s outdated workforce development system. The vote was 415-6. The Senate passed the bill with amendments on June 25th by a vote of 95-3. The bill now goes to the President for his expected signature.

The bill eliminates 15 non-performing job programs and restricts the ability to establish new programs. It also repeals outdated federal regulations to provide direct access to training assistance, and requires partners at career centers to contribute to the centers' infrastructure costs.

In addition, H.R. 803 gives the states greater authority to develop a single, unified plan to coordinate the delivery of services and eliminate duplicative reporting requirements. The bill requires the Secretary of Labor to navigate the approval process for a state’s unified plan through other federal agencies, removing an administrative burden on the states. It also provides local leaders enhanced flexibility over the use of federal funds.

To increase accountability and effectiveness, the bill requires state and local leaders to adhere to common performance measures for services provided to adults and youth. It also requires the Secretary of Labor to reduce funding to states not meeting their performance goals. Additionally, the bill requires an independent evaluation of all workforce development programs and activities at least once every four years.


**APPROPRIATIONS: HOUSE TAKES UP FY15 ENERGY AND WATER BILL**

The House began debate on the FY 2015 Appropriations for Energy and Water (H.R. 4923) on Wednesday, July 9, 2014. The legislation provides annual funding for national defense nuclear weapons activities, the Army Corps of Engineers, various programs under the Department of Energy (DOE), and other related agencies. The bill totals $34 billion – a $50 million reduction from the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and an increase of $327 million above the President's request. This includes a total of at
least $19.992 billion for the Energy Department ($11.4 billion of which is for the DOE’s Nuclear Security Administration) and $5.5 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers. Spending provided for the Interior Department includes $856 million for water and related resources, $57 million for the Central Valley Project Restoration fund, and $37 million for the California Bay-Delta restoration.

The bill includes $5.1 billion for the Office of Science – the same as the fiscal year 2014 enacted level, and $40 million below the budget request. This funding supports Advanced Scientific Computing Research, Basic Energy Sciences, Biological and Environmental Research, Fusion Energy Sciences, High Energy Physics, Nuclear Physics, Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists, Science Laboratories Infrastructure, Safeguards and Security, and Program Direction.

The legislation also contains $1 billion – $100.7 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level and $29 million below the President’s request – for the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation to help manage, develop, and protect the water resources of western states.

In response to the drought in California, the bill includes a provision that would allow at least 90% of funds appropriated for the California Bay-Delta Restoration Fund and the Central Valley Project Restoration Fund to be used for purchasing water, until the Secretary certifies that another solution has been implemented in regards to the San Joaquin Valley water shortage. The bill would also prohibit funds from being used to enforce a proposed rule to change the definition of national waters under the Clean Water Act.

During floor consideration, the House dealt with dozens of amendments, including the following offered by members of the California delegation:

Hahn (San Pedro) - to increase funding for Corps of Engineers Operation and Maintenance by $57.6 million and to reduce funding for Nuclear Energy Programs by $73,309,100. The amendment would have directed Harbor and Maintenance Trust Fund dollars be dedicated to improving the nation’s ports. Agreed to 281-137.

Ruiz (Palm Desert) - to increase the funding for the Water and Related Resources account by $1 million for the purpose of addressing environmental restoration, specifically the Salton Sea. Agreed to by voice vote.

Swalwell (Dublin) - to increase funding for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by $111,641,000 and reduce funding for Fossil Energy Research and Development by $161,879,450. Defeated 172-245

McClintock (Thousand Oaks) - to reduce research and development funds for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by $1,789,000,000; Nuclear Energy Programs by $717 million; Fossil Energy Research and Development Programs by $593 million and to apply $3,099,000,000 to the spending reduction account. Defeated 97-321.

McNerney (Pleasanton) - to increase funding for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by $20 million and reduce funding for Departmental Administration by the same amount. Defeated by voice vote.

Speier (Hillsborough) - to reduce funding for Fossil Energy Research Development by $30,935,000 and to apply the savings to the spending reduction account. Defeated 184-235.

Spier - Prohibiting the use of funds in contravention of a pilot program aimed at providing contractors with whistleblower protection. Agreed to by voice vote.

Schiff (Burbank) - to increase funds for the Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) account by $20 million and reduce funds for the Departmental Administration account of the Department of Energy by a similar amount. Agreed to 216-205.

McNerney - to prohibit the use of funds for the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. Withdrawn.
The day before the House began consideration of the bill, the White House issued a statement threatening to veto it, citing what officials call “significant underfunding for critical investments” in clean energy initiatives, “excessive” restrictions on nonproliferation contracts with Russia, and provisions against the EPA over controversial proposed Clean Water Act regulations.

The House is expected to pass the bill before adjourning for the week.

For more information, go to:

APPROPRIATIONS: HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS FY 15 INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT FUNDING

On Wednesday, July 9, 2014, the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Ken Calvert, (Corona)) of House Appropriations Committee approved the Fiscal Year 2015 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill by voice vote. The bill provides annual funding for the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other agencies and commissions. Rep. Calvert said the focus of the subcommittee was on “producing energy on federal lands, providing robust funding for our wildland fire accounts, and addressing a variety of health and safety needs within Indian Country. I am especially proud that we have been able to extend and pay for the PILT program, which provides critical resources to so many communities, such as Riverside County, throughout the country,” while significantly reducing funding levels to the EPA.

In total, the bill funds wildland firefighting and prevention programs at $4.1 billion, $149 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. The bill fully funds the 10-year average for wildland fire suppression costs for both the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service, includes an additional $470 million for the Forest Service to help fill the expected shortfall in fire suppression funding this year, and provides an increase of $90 million above the current level for hazardous fuels management. In addition, the bill includes funding for two next-generation aircraft to replace decades-old planes used for large-scale fire suppression.

The bill provides $442 million for the “Payments In Lieu of Taxes” (PILT) program through a one-year extension of this mandatory program. PILT provides funds for local governments to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their areas. The authorization for PILT is set to expire on September 30, 2014, and without congressional action, many rural communities could face huge budget shortfalls impacting public safety, education, and other local government responsibilities.

The bill funds the EPA at $7.5 billion, a reduction of $717 million, or 9%, below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Administrative funding for the agency is cut by $24 million, including a 50 percent reduction to the Office of the Administrator, the Office of Congressional Affairs, and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. In addition, staffing levels at the EPA are held to 15,000, the lowest level since 1989.

The legislation also includes provisions to block several specific EPA regulations, including the implementation of new greenhouse gas regulations for new and existing power plants, the redefining of “navigable waters” under the Clean Water Act, and regulations limiting the lead content of ammunition and fishing tackle. The bill also includes policy provisions aimed at protecting the privacy of dairy and livestock farmers’ personal information.

The bill includes $4.6 billion for the Indian Health Service, an increase of $208 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This funding will help provide increased access to and improved
healthcare for Native Americans, and includes targeted funding for problematic health care issues, including those related to domestic violence, dental health, alcohol and substance abuse, cardiovascular health, diabetes, and infant mortality.

The bill contains $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Land Management, a decrease of $13 million from the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Within this funding, the bill increases oil and gas programs by $20 million from the fiscal year 2014 enacted level to speed permitting and to increase inspections. The bill also rejects Administration proposals to increase oil and gas fees by $48 million and increase federal land grazing fees by $6.5 million.

The legislation contains $2.6 billion for the National Park Service, an increase of $3 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. This funding will ensure that every National Park will remain open and fully operational next year.

The bill includes $5.6 billion for the Forest Service, which is $85.7 million above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Much of this funding is related to the aforementioned wildland fire prevention and suppression program. The bill also includes a provision prohibiting the Forest Service or BLM from issuing new closures of public lands to hunting and recreational shooting, except in the case of public safety or extreme weather, and does not include any of the Administration’s proposed increases in livestock grazing fees.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is funded at $1.4 billion in the bill, a cut of $4 million below the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Within this amount, the legislation prioritizes funding for programs such as those to fight invasive species, to prevent illegal wildlife trafficking, and to prevent the closure of fish hatcheries. The bill includes a one-year delay on any further Endangered Species Act rulemaking for the “greater sage-grouse” and “Gunnison sage-grouse,” and prohibits the FWS from administratively establishing new or expanding existing wildlife refuges. For more information on the greater sage-grouse population in California, please visit: https://www.dfg.ca.gov/regions/6/Conservation/Sage_Grouse.html

The bill includes $1 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey, a $4 million increase above the fiscal year 2014 enacted level. Within this amount, the bill prioritizes funding for programs dealing with natural hazards, stream gages, the groundwater monitoring network, mapping activities, and the earthquake early warning system.

The bill includes $138 million for each of the endowments within the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, a reduction of $16 million compared to the fiscal year 2014 enacted level.

Program Eliminations – The bill does not include funding for several programs, such as: the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, EPA’s U.S.-Mexico Border grant program, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission.


SOCIAL SERVICES: SENATE COMMITTEE ADDRESSES CHILD TRAFFICKING

On July 8, 2014, the Children and Families Subcommittee of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing titled "Falling Through the Cracks: The Challenges of Prevention and Identification in Child Trafficking and Private Re-Homing." This hearing follows the recent House passage of five bills aimed at preventing human trafficking, and focuses on what child welfare agencies, schools, and other institutions are doing in response to growing awareness of this issue that largely affects abused and neglected children. While the scope of the problem is difficult to measure, it is known that this systemic exploitation of minors for sex affects both children trafficked
from abroad as well as U.S. citizens. "Private re-homing" is a term that has come to be used to describe the behavior of parents who seek to relinquish care of their adopted children outside the purview of the courts or public child welfare agencies, which leaves children vulnerable to exploitation.

Witnesses included: JooYeun Chang, Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services; Jenee' Littrell, Assistant Principal, Grossmont Union High School District, San Diego County, CA; Abigail English, Director, Center for Adolescent Health and the Law, Chapel Hill, NC; Megan Twohey, investigative reporter, Thomson Reuters, New York, NY.

"Educate all school staff about the warning signs. If I knew I had somewhere to turn, I would have done so," said a student and trafficking victim from Grossmont High School in San Diego on how schools should respond to this critical issue. Assistant Principal at Grossmont, Jenee' Littrell, discussed the development and implementation of programs and services that aim to do just that. She emphasized the interagency cooperation necessary to maximize the effectiveness of any program aimed at intervening in and ultimately preventing instances of child trafficking. Among the key components of the program are efforts to train educators, law enforcement officers, social workers, and others on how to recognize and report apparent victims of these crimes, as well as clear district policy on how to respond to disclosures from a suspected victim. Since developing stronger working relationships with these outside institutions, Ms. Littrell reported, "We have learned the magnitude and scope of the problem is greater than any one of our systems realized and it is definitely more challenging that any one system can address alone. We have also learned that schools play a critical role in protecting students and need the proper training and support in order to do so." Other services include providing trauma-specific counseling to victims, developing prevention curriculum with the help of national experts for students and parents, and cross-system mechanisms for collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

In September 2013, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published "Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States," which is intended to elevate the issue and offer guidance to child welfare system service providers, based on current research and practice, to improve the collective response to this issue. "No single system can successfully combat trafficking. Preventing, identifying, and serving victims of trafficking require a multi-system, coordinated approach within and across local, tribal, state, and federal levels. That is why the Children's Bureau [of HHS] developed a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) titled 'Grants to Address Trafficking within the Child Welfare population.' This grant is designed to continue the development of child welfare systems' response to human trafficking through infrastructure building, and a multi-system approach with schools, local law enforcement, juvenile justice, courts systems, runaway and homeless youth programs, Children's Justice Act (CJA) grantees, child advocacy centers, anti-trafficking organizations, and other necessary service providers," JooYeun Chang, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, explained. She also described ongoing efforts to identify data elements that can be collected and reported in order to better determine the extent of the problem and improve services to youth.

Ms. Chang also testified about the issue of "private re-homing," which came to light after a five year investigation by Reuters journalist Megan Twohey. In a "small but significant number of cases," Chang explained, online bulletin boards have been used as a means for adoptive families to "advertise" and facilitate placements of their children with non-relative strangers, without oversight or approval from courts or child welfare agencies. Without robust post-adoption services, many families struggle to raise children who suffer from a variety of mental health issues, often stemming from prior abuse or neglect. Feeling they have nowhere to turn, the families will sign over power of attorney to strangers from the internet, with no background checks or other means of identifying potential predators. The
practice of re-homing is "clearly an act of abuse and neglect, and should receive the full attention of child welfare agencies," stated Chang. Because state laws largely govern what legally constitutes abuse and neglect, with the federal government providing only a minimum definition of child maltreatment, grants to support a range of prevention, and intervention and post permanency supports, the Children's Bureau is encouraging states to review their laws in these areas to ensure that the issues that arise through the practice of re-homing are adequately addressed.

"No state or federal laws specifically prohibit re-homing. Some states restrict the advertising and custody transfers of children, but those laws are confusing, frequently ignored and rarely prescribe criminal sanctions. An agreement among the 50 U.S. states called the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, or ICPC, is meant to ensure that child welfare authorities oversee custody transfers, review prospective parents and account for what happens to children sent from one state to another. Many law-enforcement officials told me they had never heard of the compact," testified Ms. Twohey. California was not among the four states she mentioned that have enacted new restrictions on child advertising, custody transfers or both, since her reporting. She testified that, the Congressional Research Service issued a report recommending ways Congress could restrict re-homing, and that the Government Accountability Office will begin studying state and federal policies related to re-homing this summer. There is also an interagency group of four federal departments that have been meeting to identify ways to address re-homing. As of now, however, there is no systematic way to measure this underreported problem, and so the scope of it unknown.

For more information about these issues, please visit: http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=a4e5ff76-5056-a032-5244-39edac8f3221

EDUCATION: HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS THREE HIGHER ED BILLS

As part of an effort to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the House Education and the Workforce Committee convened on July 10, 2014, to advance three bipartisan bills to reform the nation’s higher education system: the Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act (H.R. 3136), the Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act (H.R. 4983), and the Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act (H.R. 4984). The legislative proposals are guided by the four principles established by the Committee for reforming the HEA: (1) empowering students and families to make informed decisions; (2) simplifying and improving student aid; (3) promoting innovation, access, and completion; and (4) ensuring strong accountability and a limited federal role.

All three of the bills were advanced by voice vote.

The Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act (H.R. 3136) aims to foster competency-based education demonstration projects to provide students new opportunities to receive a high-quality education that fits their personal and financial needs. “Competency-based” education is a term used to describe new models of education being developed that can measure students’ actual learning rather than just the time spent in class. This type of innovation can potentially offer students new educational opportunities tailored to their specific personal and financial needs, yet regulators and institutions have traditionally used “credit hours” to measure student progress and disburse student aid. H.R. 3136 will authorize the Secretary of Education to waive current statutory and regulatory requirements that impede the creation of competency-based education programs.

The Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act (H.R. 4983) is designed to help students and families make informed decisions about their higher education options. While the federal government provides financial assistance for millions of students to use at the institution of their choice,
students and families receive an overwhelming amount of data as they try to make this important decision. H.R. 4983 will require the Secretary of Education to create a consumer-tested College Dashboard that would display only key information students need when deciding which school to attend. Because current data often fails to account for non-traditional students and Pell Grant recipients, the College Dashboard would be required to include completion rate information about these students. Ultimately, the bill would aim to streamline and eliminate unnecessary information and federal transparency initiatives.

The Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act (H.R. 4984) will provide enhanced counseling for recipients of federal financial aid to promote financial literacy. Although financial counseling is already required for students before they receive their first federal loan, a survey of current students and recent graduates with a high level of student loan debt found that more than 40 percent could not recall having received financial counseling. Given the confusing maze of loan and grant programs students must navigate at the state and federal levels, as well as assistance available at each institution and within the private sector, students are not equipped to manage the burdens of their student loans, and often do not understand their options. H.R. 4984 would require that students who participate in the federal loan program receive interactive counseling each year and when they exit their education program, which must reflect their individual borrowing situation. It would also require borrowers to consent each year before receiving federal student loans, to ensure awareness about the financial obligations students are accumulating. Finally, the Secretary of Education would be directed to maintain and disseminate a consumer-tested, online counseling tool that institutions can use to provide annual loan counseling, exit counseling, and annual Pell Grant counseling to their students.

To get more information about these three bills, please visit: http://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=387323

IMMIGRATION: SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY LOOKS AT BORDER ISSUES

On Wednesday, July 9, 2014 the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing titled "Challenges at the Border: Examining the Causes, Consequences, and Responses to the Rise in Apprehensions at the Southern Border." A humanitarian crisis in the form of a large surge in undocumented immigration from Central America—including unprecedented numbers of unaccompanied children and families being apprehended at the border—is overwhelming the resources of Customs and Border Patrol to process and send these individuals back to their home countries. Immigrants from Central America must be flown back to their countries; unaccompanied children and families present further challenges, because federal law requires the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate all children, and families must be detained in special facilities that include educational opportunities for the children. An Administration proposal of $3.7 billion dollars in emergency funding to handle this situation includes $1.5 billion for DHS to detain and deport more families, build temporary detention facilities for the Border Patrol, and enhance investigations into human smuggling networks. (See related article above.) The Senate hearing follows a House Homeland Security Committee hearing held on June 24th on the same subject matter, in which witnesses testified about the DHS-wide response and inter-agency cooperation being coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

Department of Homeland Security; Mark H. Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families; Francisco Palmieri, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Caribbean and Central America, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Juan P. Osuna, Director, Executive Office of Immigration Review, U.S. Department of Justice.

“As Secretary Johnson said on June 24th, this is a humanitarian issue as much as it is a matter of border security. . . . Therefore, to address this situation, our strategy is three-fold: (1) process the increased tide of unaccompanied children through the system as quickly as possible; (2) stem the increased tide of illegal migration into the Rio Grande Valley; and (3) do these things in a manner consistent with our laws and values as Americans,” testified Mr. Fugate, on behalf of FEMA. A surge of border patrol agents, immigration judges, Spanish-speaking case managers, medical staff, and others are all contributing to the expedition of processing these cases. To stem the tide of the immigration, a public awareness campaign has been launched in Central American countries to educate parents about the dangers and futility of sending their children on the trek to the United States.

Mr. Palmieri of the U.S. Department of State emphasized the efforts being undertaken to implement the second prong of the above approach: “We are dedicating existing resources to manage the near-term surge in unaccompanied children and family units and to implement programs to address the long-term challenges that constitute the complex and systematic factors driving migration. However, we must be realistic. In order to achieve the substantial, transformative change in Central America that will truly stem migration flows, all the governments, including greater collaboration with international partners, must demonstrate the political will and necessary commitment. We will continue to work closely with Congress on developing a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach that provides the necessary resources to meet this migration challenge.”

For more information, please visit:

SOCIAL SERVICES: HOUSE BUDGET ASSESSES WAR ON POVERTY

Over the past year, the House Budget Committee has held a series of hearings on the War on Poverty, in which policy experts, community groups, and federal officials have been invited to testify about the role of the federal government in providing a safety net for families and individuals. In the fifth installation, held on July 8, 2014 private sector efforts to coordinate with the public sector, including people who coordinate state programs with private charity, were highlighted. Witnesses discussed how discrete government services and resources, such as housing assistance, food stamps, and job training, can be better coordinated to provide holistic solutions to distinct individual needs.

Witnesses included: Heather Reynolds, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Fort Worth; Jennifer Tiller, Director of Operations, America Works of Washington, D.C.; and Tianna Gaines-Turner, Member, Witnesses to Hunger.

“Poverty is not just one issue that can be solved at one time. It’s not just an issue of jobs, or food, or housing, or energy assistance, and safety. It’s a people issue. And you can’t slice people up into issues. We are whole human beings. Poverty has to do with a whole person who is in a family, in a neighborhood, in a community,” Ms. Gaines-Turner testified. As someone who has experienced poverty within her own family and in her community, she provided insights about how the current modes of government assistance stop short of moving people from economic dependence to self-sufficiency. Throughout her testimony, she provided anecdotes to highlight the need for Congress to act in the following ways: (1) provide living wages and family-oriented labor policies; (2) improve the safety net
to increase economic mobility, and (3) involve the people that have the answers. In terms of improving
the safety net, she described the “catch-22” that many families find themselves in: that is, when families
just begin to earn more money, they lose their benefits too quickly, and find themselves with even less
than when they had benefits. Finding a way to ease the transition would incentivize more families to
seize opportunities to earn the money they need to be self-sufficient. She also argued that the “Work
First” policy pushes families to abandon educational opportunities in favor of low wage jobs for fear of
losing their benefits, even when they might be close to attaining a degree or certificate that could lead to
better paying jobs instead.

As a counterpoint to the suggestion that the “Work First” policy is a hinderance to individuals
trying to attain better jobs for economic security, Jennifer Tiller of America Works, the pioneer of that
policy, testified that their model has been “critical to erasing years that welfare recipients spend in and
out of education and training programs, which seldom lead to jobs.” America Works recommends
continued emphasis on work requirements for those receiving transfer payments and public subsidies
that are deemed eligible for employment.

To further guide policy decisions, Heather Reynolds offered proposals on how to better collect
relevant data and track results in a way that will incentivize better outcomes and hold service-providers
more accountable. “From my experience, many federal programs are not designed and measured for the
end goal impact. How can we set our goal at ending homelessness and then measure success by
counting the number of shelter beds we fill? How can we have a goal of a family thriving and then
count it successful when they are signed up for public benefits? That is why it is my firm belief that
research and a focus on results has to be paired with the services provided,” she said, before going on to
testify about a pilot project that her organization is undertaking to track outcomes of low-income
college students who are receiving support services through a holistic case management approach,
compared to those who are not. Her recommendations included replicating best practices for holistic
case management models that more effectively break the cycle of poverty.

For more information, please visit:

RESOURCES: HOUSE SCIENCE COMMITTEE EXAMINES CLEAN WATER ACT
PROVISION

Following three other House Committee hearings on the issue, the Science, Space and
Technology Committee received testimony from Robert W. Perciasepe, Environmental Protection
Agency Deputy Administrator, on the jointly proposed EPA/Army Corps of Engineers rule to redefine
“navigable waters” under the Clean Water Act. The proposed rule has incited controversy due to the
perceived threat of vastly expanded regulatory control over unclearly defined bodies of water,
potentially including small streams or water in ditches. Chairman Lamar Smith (TX) notes that the rule
is 370 pages, “but it never actually defines ‘water,’” and instead “the Agency gives itself extraordinary
power to pick and choose on a case-by-case basis.”

A central tenet of the controversy over the proposed rule is that many stakeholders in the
farming community interpret the rule as negating longstanding agricultural exemptions. In response,
Mr. Perciasepe stated, “The proposed rule preserves all existing agricultural exemptions under the
CWA and in addition, we worked closely with our partners at the U.S. Department of Agriculture to
promote additional conservation practices that enhance farming and protect water quality through a
companion Interpretive Rule that clarifies which practices are exempt from CWA permitting
requirements. We are also working with our partners in the states and tribes to assure their voices are
effectively represented as we proceed through this rulemaking. The proposed rule continues to respect states’ well-defined and long-standing relationships with federal agencies in implementing CWA programs.”

The EPA continues to defend the proposed rule, saying that it is in fact meant to simplify and improve the process for determining waters that are, and are not, covered by the Act. As Mr. Perciasepe pointed out, the impetus for this rulemaking was to respond to requests from stakeholders across the country to make the process of identifying waters protected under the CWA easier to understand, more predictable, and more consistent with the law and peer-reviewed science. “We believe the result of this rulemaking will be to improve the process for making jurisdictional determinations for the CWA by minimizing delays and costs and to improve predictability and consistency for landowners,” he testified. “I look forward to robust public input on the agencies’ proposed rule to ensure that it achieves this goal.”

The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on April 21, 2014, and is available to the public now for review and comment.

For the full testimony of the Honorable Robert W. Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, please visit:
http://science.house.gov/hearing/full-committee-hearing-navigating-clean-water-act-water-wet

To see previous Bulletin articles on the subject, go to: http://www.calinst.org/bul2/b2118.pdf