IMMIGRATION: JOINT COMMITTEE DEBATES
DEPORTATION POLICY, DHS FUNDING DEADLINE
LOOMS


Witnesses included Scott R. Jones, Sheriff, Sacramento County Sheriff's Department; Michael Ronnebeck, Uncle of Grant Ronnebeck; Jamiel Shaw, Father of Jamiel Shaw II; Jessica Vaughn, Director of Policy Studies, Center for Immigration Studies; and Mr. Gregory Z. Chen, Director of Advocacy, American Immigration Lawyers Association.

"California is home to an estimated 24% of ALL undocumented immigrants. The vast majority are law abiding and hard working men, women and families who want nothing more than to live the American Dream. That being said, there is a segment in every population – including the undocumented population – that will choose crime, drugs, violence, and gangs as a way of life," explained Sheriff Jones. He focused his comments on the lack of a cohesive national policy regarding immigration, which leaves states to fill the policy vacuum, contrary to the federal supremacy clause. He stated that sheriffs are forced not to honor Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainers in the absence of federal support due to lawsuit threats by advocacy groups, leaving sheriffs accountable not to the law but to the political climate of their state. Therefore, undocumented individuals held by local law enforcement are often released back into the community. Ms. Vaughn criticized the prioritization policies of the Obama Administration, which she argued prevent the deportation of certain criminals, even if they are in ICE custody, and releases them to potentially commit more serious crimes.
Ranking Member Stephen Lynch (MA) expressed his condolences to the witnesses affected by crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, but also pointed to higher levels of removal by the Obama Administration in relation to previous administrations and condemned the effort to "hold hostage" funding for the Department of Homeland Security. Congressman Jordan countered, "How can Congress fund something that we all believe is unconstitutional and a federal judge says is unlawful? How can we do that?" Funding for the Department of Homeland Security expires within two days of the hearing. The Senate is expected to vote on a clean funding bill, perhaps as early as Friday, although another short-term continuing resolution may be necessary to keep the agency open, because the House may not take up the clean bill, or may again add riders to it regarding the President’s executive actions on immigration.


**HUMAN TRAFFICKING: REFORM SPEARHEADED BY WOMEN OF THE SENATE, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

The Senate Judiciary Committee convened for a hearing titled, "Human Trafficking in the United States: Protecting the Victims," on Tuesday, February 24, 2015. In his opening statement, Chairman Chuck Grassley (IA) likened labor and sex trafficking to modern day slavery. Furthermore, he emphasized the effects on both citizens and noncitizens, especially vulnerable children and teenagers. The women of the Senate requested the hearing on a bipartisan basis.

Witnesses on Panel I included testimony from Senators Susan M. Collins (ME), Kirsten Gillibrand (NY), Kelly Ayotte (NH), and Barbara Mikulski (MD).

"This is not only a women's issue, this is a human being issue," declared Senator Mikulski. Additionally, Senator Collins spoke in support of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking Prevention Act, which she introduced along with Judiciary Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (VT) this Congress. The bill reauthorizes preventative and treatment services, such as the Street Outreach Program, Basic Centers Programs, and Transitional Living Program, utilized by homeless individuals susceptible to trafficking.

Witnesses on Panel II included Holly Austin Smith, Trafficking Survivor and Author, *Walking Prey*, Richmond, Va.; Michael Ferjak, Senior Criminal Investigator and Director, Human Trafficking and Enforcement Prosecution Initiative, Iowa Department of Justice, Des Moines, Iowa; Malika Saada Saar, Executive Director, Human Rights Project for Girls; and Jayne Bigelsen, Director, Anti-Human Trafficking Initiatives, and Co-director, Legal Advocacy, Covenant House International, New York, N.Y.

"There should be no difference between raping a child and paying to rape a child. Yet, there is... We have ended impunity for the traffickers who sell children's bodies as property. Now, we must end impunity for the buyers," stated Ms Saada Saar. Furthermore, she argued that slavery was combated in the United States by penalizing both suppliers and buyers of slaves. Therefore, traffickers and client-rapists must be penalized for their participation in the sex trade, thereby tackling both supply and
demand. She spoke in support of the Justice for Human Trafficking Act, which prevents the criminalization of minors by charging them with child prostitution when they are forced into sexual exploitation. Additionally, she supports the criminalization of the purchase of sex with minors by requiring a charge of statutory rape and registration into the sex offender database.

Ms. Holly Austin Smith also emphasized the importance of safe harbor laws, which treat those forced into sexual slavery as victims instead of criminals. As part of an effort to raise awareness concerning human trafficking, she recommended educational curriculum for students regarding the existence of human trafficking and warning signs in order to prevent their victimization.

For more information, please visit: http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/meetings/human-trafficking-in-the-united-states-protecting-the-victims

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING: SENATE JUDICIARY MARKS UP TRAFFICKING BILLS**


The two bills considered for markup followed Tuesday's hearing regarding human trafficking. (See article above.) A description of the bills, amendments, and outcomes are described below:

- S.178 (Sen. John Cornyn-TX) provides more services to victims while penalizing perpetrators of human trafficking. Senator Cornyn offered a substitute amendment to include aspects of the Bring Missing Children Home Act (Sen. Rob Portman-OH) and the Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act (Rep. Mike Honda-San Jose). Chairman Charles Grassley (IA) offered an amendment that encourages federal agencies to grant existing resources to street based services for runaway and homeless youth, update authorizing language for the cyber tip line of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to reference child sex trafficking in statute, and ensures that trafficking victim protection grants can be used to meet the housing needs of victims. Lastly, Senator Michael Blumenthal (CT) offered an amendment to give permanent status in statute to a program that trains wounded veterans in law enforcement computer forensics for the purpose of prosecuting traffickers. These amendments were adopted, and S. 178 was agreed to as amended by a vote of 19-0-1.

- S. 166 (Sen. Amy Klobuchar-MN) encourages states to treat children trafficked in the sex industry as victims instead of child prostitutes. Senator Klobuchar offered a technical amendment. The bill was agreed to as amended by a vote of 20-0.

Lastly, the committee approved Loretta Lynch to be Attorney General of the United States by a vote of 12-8, which was reported to the floor. All other nominations were approved by voice vote and also ordered to the floor.

**EDUCATION: SENATE COMMITTEE TACKLES REPORT ON UNIVERSITY OVER-REGULATION**

On Tuesday, February 24, 2015, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee convened for its first hearing regarding higher education. The hearing, entitled "Recalibrating Regulation of Colleges and Universities: A Report from the Task Force on Government Regulation of Higher Education," outlined recommendations to facilitate revision of inefficient and costly federal rules and regulations faced by institutions of higher education.
Witnesses included William E. Kirwan, Chancellor, University of Maryland, Adelphi, MD and Nicholas S. Zeppos, Chancellor, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

The task force consisted of sixteen presidents and chancellors. "Through the task force's work, we have learned that many regulations are well developed, address critically important issues, and provide appropriate means of institutional accountability. On the other hand, we have also discovered that too many regulations are poorly framed, confusing, overly complex, ill-conceived, or poorly executed," testified Mr. Zeppos.

Mr. Kirwan focused on the benefit students, families, and institutions would experience with revision of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. For example, applicants for the 2015-2016 school year must currently submit 2014 tax returns, even though the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) deadline is just a day after the financial aid deadline, forcing families to rush completion of their tax returns. The task force suggests allowing families to submit the previous year's completed tax returns.

Ten of the task force's recommendations have been prioritized in section III of the report. To access the report, please visit:

For more information, please visit:
http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=f5bf107c-5056-a032-52a2-c5f9dbdf4459

**SPACE: SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE STRATEGIZES NEXT STEPS IN HUMAN SPACE EXPLORATION**

On Tuesday, February 24, 2015, the Subcommittee on Space, Science, and Competitiveness of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation convened for a hearing entitled "U.S. Human Exploration Goals and Commercial Space Competitiveness." The purpose of the hearing was to examine the United States' goals in human space exploration, including the role of the commercial space industry and its contributions to U.S. global competitiveness. Among other issues, the hearing discussed the importance of a sound exploration strategy that involves NASA, partnerships with international allies, and innovation and competitiveness in the U.S. commercial space sector.


Panel II included John Elbon, Vice President and General Manager, Boeing Space Exploration; Scott Pace, Director, Space Policy Institute, Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University; and Eric Stallmer, President, Commercial Spaceflight Federation.

"NASA's portion of the federal budget peaked at 4 percent in 1965. For the past 40 years it has remained below one percent and for the last 15 years it has been driving toward .4 percent of the federal budget. Manned exploration of Mars will only be possible if our government initiates and funds such a program," explained Colonel Cunningham. He added that manned exploration is too costly for private companies to undergo alone. Furthermore, he expressed concern about the U.S.'s global position in space exploration and encouraged the elimination of dependence on foreign countries, especially Russia. Col. Aldrin agreed that a commitment to explore Mars would re-exert U.S. dominance in space exploration. Additionally, he advocated for a temporary settlement of humans on Mars rather than an immediate round-trip journey in order to mitigate costs and best utilize resources.

Mr. Elbon and Mr. Stallmer testified in support of private-public cooperation and encouraged greater federal participation in order to uncover the next frontier. Dr. Pace argued against going to Mars
in favor of further Moon exploration, which the international community prioritizes and allows the U.S. to take leadership while building international partners in space exploration. However, the Obama Administration has clearly expressed intent to pursue a Mars mission and expects to take the first steps by launching an asteroid mission in the year 2025.

For more information, please visit:
http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Hearings&ContentRecord_id=2b9c03d5-a170-4144-b8be-035bb36ca71b&ContentType_id=14f995b9-dfa5-407a-9d35-56cc7152a7ed&Group_id=b06c39af-e033-4cba-9221-de668ca1978a

SOCIAL SERVICES: HOUSE AGRICULTURE EXAMINES SNAP PROGRAM

On Wednesday, February 25, 2015, the House Agriculture Committee convened for a hearing on the review of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. "We can all agree that no one ought to go hungry in America, and SNAP is essential in protecting the most vulnerable citizens during tough times. What we don't want is for this program to hold people back from achieving their potential," stated Chairman K. Michael Conaway (TX) in his opening statement.

Witnesses included Robert Greenstein, President, Center on Budget Priorities and Douglas J. Besharov, Professor, University of Maryland School of Public Policy.

"In important respects, today's program is stronger than at any previous point. By taking advantage of modern technology and business practices, SNAP has become substantially more efficient and accurate (its error rate is at its lowest level on record), while keeping administrative costs modest," testified Mr. Greenstein. He added that as of the end of 2014 SNAP had helped more than 46 million low-income Americans afford a nutritionally adequate diet by providing them with modest benefits that can be used only to purchase food. SNAP participants receive an average benefit of $1.42 per person per meal.

The number of eligible recipients for SNAP expands during economic slumps and contracts during robust economic times. About 1.5 million fewer people received SNAP in November 2014 than in December 2012, a partial testament to the economic recovery. However, Mr. Greenstein also testified to the fact that the number of employed SNAP participants has increased due to the erosion of the real value of incomes near the bottom of the wage scale. Furthermore, people aged 18 to 50 who are not raising minor children may receive SNAP benefits for only three months (while they are not employed at least half time) out of every three years, even if they have looked diligently for work but cannot find it. Mr. Greenstein expressed the opinion that those searching for work for longer than three months ought to qualify for SNAP benefits, since the majority of states do not offer workfare slots as Congress intended.

Professor Besharov offered a contrasting perspective: "A main reason SNAP enjoys wide political support is that the public continues to view it as an anti-hunger program when, for many recipients, it is really an income-supplementation program. This is also a worthy purpose, but because the program was not designed for that purpose, the result is a program that has many unintended and, many believe, negative effects." He argued that malnutrition is not a problem today as it was in the 1960s when the Food Stamp program was initiated, that today's issue of food insecurity does not warrant a $75 billion-plus program, and that the central nutritional problem facing the poor is obesity - or too much caloric intake rather than not enough. Lastly, he argued that many of those who receive SNAP benefits can afford food, but cannot afford other costs of living and thus rely on SNAP benefits to supplement their income, which is possible due to popular support of the program. Yet, he also admitted that this fact does not make SNAP unworthy and advocated for better alignment of safety net
programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance, Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax credits.

For more information, please visit: https://agriculture.house.gov/hearing/full-committee-agriculture-public-hearing-review-snap-program

TRANSPORTATION: SENATE COMMITTEE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, DISCUSSES MAP-21 REAUTHORIZATION

On Wednesday, February 25, 2015 the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a full committee hearing to consider the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) reauthorization. The purpose of the hearing was to examine the link between a long-term federal surface transportation bill and economic productivity, and the importance of partnering with states to maintain, modernize and expand infrastructure to ensure a reliable national surface transportation network.

Chairman James Inhofe (OK) and Ranking Member Barbara Boxer (CA) expressed the urgency of Congressional action due to the upcoming May deadline on the Highway Trust Fund and cautioned against another mere extension in a show of bipartisan agreement.

Witnesses included Steve Heminger, Executive Director, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, San Francisco, CA; Thomas J. Riordan, President and CEO, Neenah Enterprises, Inc.; Carlos Braceras, Executive Director, Utah Department of Transportation; Walt Rowen, President, Susquehanna Glass Company; and David Gardner, Vice President, Supply Chain and Customer Experience, Ingredion Incorporated.

"Indeed, the only question is whether we want to pay now to improve our roads and rail lines, or whether we want to pay later in crumbling facilities that will curtail our economic potential," stated Mr. Heminger of the Metropolitan Transportation Committee, the metropolitan planning organization for the San Francisco Bay Area. He testified that the U.S. economy will rise or fall based on how well metro economies compete in the global marketplace, adding that Bay Area residents contribute almost 60% more to U.S. gross domestic product than the average American. He advocated for dedicated funding between the U.S. Department of Transportation and the nation's metropolitan planning organizations.

Additionally, Mr. Rowen testified to the importance of investment in infrastructure for small businesses: "Last year my business shipped over 57,000 small packages through UPS and FedEx and generated more than a million dollars in freight charges. Our success relies heavily on our ability to deliver products efficiently and cost-effectively to our customers." He added that when UPS and FedEx raise shipping rates due to deteriorating infrastructure, the impact on small business could be devastating.

Funding for a multi-year reauthorization continues to vex Congress. One suggestion is to devolve the federal program and allow states to cover the cost by raising taxes, to which Director Braceras responded, "The answer of whether or not to devolve the federal program is if you believe there is no role for federal government in public transportation. I believe there is a strong purpose in our nation's transportation system of having a strong federal role." Other solutions include a rise in the gas tax with middle class offsets, repatriation of foreign income as a part of business tax reform (as the Administration has proposed), and an increase in domestic energy production with revenues dedicated to infrastructure. All witnesses support the concept of a gas tax as a sustainable user fee.

Mr. Gardner warned against another funding extension because it undermines investment, which prevents businesses from planning in advance for their long-term best interest and that of their customers.
RESOURCES: LAO RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WATER BOND IMPLEMENTATION

On February 11, 2015, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) issued a report entitled, "The 2015-16 Budget: Effectively Implementing the 2014 Water Bond." The report describes the Water Bond, reviews the Governor's proposal to implement the bond, identifies guiding principles for implementation, and recommends steps for the State Legislature to ensure effective implementation.

On November 4, 2014 voters approved Proposition 1, which provides a total of $7.5 billion in general obligation bonds for various water-related programs. Some of the larger allocations include $2.7 billion for water storage projects and $1.5 billion for watershed protection and restoration projects. Additional funding is provided for groundwater sustainability, regional water management, water recycling and desalination, water treatment, and flood protection.

The Governor's budget proposes to appropriate $533 million from Proposition 1 in 2015-16. This includes $178 million for various watershed protection and restoration activities, $137 million for water recycling and desalination projects, and $69 million for projects to improve drinking water in disadvantaged communities.

While the Governor's proposals are generally consistent with the intent of the bond, the LAO makes a list of recommendations to the Legislature in order to encourage sufficient oversight and evaluation. Such recommendations include requiring cost-effectiveness criteria as an aspect of project selection, consulting with experts outside of the state government regarding technical assistance, and requiring departments to collect data to be used for accountability purposes.

In order to access the report, please visit: http://lao.ca.gov/Publications.Detail/3171