



THE CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR FEDERAL POLICY RESEARCH

1608 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Suite 213, Washington, D.C. 20036
202-546-3700 e-mail: randsell@calinst.org web: <http://www.calinst.org>

California Capitol Hill Bulletin

Volume 12, Bulletin 21 – July 22, 2005

To expand communications between Washington and California, the California Institute provides periodic fax and e-mail bulletins regarding current activity on Capitol Hill that directly affects our state. Bulletins are published weekly during sessions of Congress, and occasionally during other periods.

POMBO AND TAUSCHER CIRCULATING DELEGATION LETTER CRITICIZING SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION ON NIF FUNDING

This week Representatives Richard Pombo (Tracy) and Ellen Tauscher (Alamo) are circulating among the California Congressional Delegation a letter challenging the Senate Appropriations Committee's efforts to cease funding for construction of the National Ignition Facility (NIF). The letter notes that the facility is already approximately 80 percent complete, and cutting off funds now would be "a massive waste of taxpayer dollars" and would undermine national security.

The letter, to be sent next week to House Energy & Water Subcommittee leaders, notes that "The Senate subcommittee's action stands in stark contrast to the decisions of the Senate Armed Services, House Armed Services and House Appropriations committees to provide full funding for NIF construction." The writers note that NIF is on schedule, cost, and performance.

The California letter quotes Ambassador Linton Brooks, the head of President Bush's National Nuclear Security Administration, who recently stated that "Without NIF and the understanding it will bring, the Stockpile Stewardship Program will not be able to achieve its objectives." It also cites Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman's recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee that called NIF "an essential component of the Stockpile Stewardship Program and of a responsive nuclear infrastructure," and General John Gordon, who said, "Without the NIF, the ability of the weapons laboratories to continue to certify the safety, security, and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile into the future, without underground testing is doubtful." It adds that Ambassador Brooks identified NIF as "one of the best managed projects."

The letter's authors note that, since 1997, nearly \$2.8 billion has already been invested in NIF, which is near completion at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and they note that the facility supports more than 1,000 California jobs annually.

NIF will use 192 laser beams to concentrate energy on a single target, leading to opportunities to conduct research, maintain nuclear stock, and experiment regarding potential future energy sources.

CONTENTS:

Pombo and Tauscher Circulating Delegation Letter Criticizing Senate Subcommittee Action on NIF Funding	1
Higher Education Mark Up Spans Three Days	2
BRAC Commission Adds Three California Bases To List for Closure/Realignment Consideration ...	3
House CAFTA Vote May Occur Next Week; Outcome Uncertain	4
TEA-21 Reauthorization Gets Extension Number Ten	5
Senate Environment Reports Municipal Water Grants Bill	5
PPIC Releases Special Survey on Californians and the Environment	6
Senate Conducts Hearing on California Land Bill ...	6
House To Consider Calvert NASA Reauthorization Bill on Friday	6
House Science Committee Holds Hydrogen, Fuel Cell Hearing	7
PPIC Luncheon Briefing on July 26 re California's Medi-Cal Program	7
Redistricting Initiative Plan Hits Legal Snag	8
Senate Transportation Appropriations Moves Forward	8
Three New Appropriations Analyses Available on Institute's Website: House Labor-H, House Interior-Environment, and Senate Agriculture ...	8

Even before becoming fully operational, 2004 experiments using just the first four beams of the facility have demonstrated NIF's potential scientific value, the letter notes, toward its goals of "maintaining the nation's nuclear deterrent without nuclear testing, advancing research and development of inertial confinement fusion as a clean energy source, and exploring basic science issues, such as materials sciences and astrophysics."

Offices of members wishing to sign onto the letter should contact Simon Limage with Rep. Tauscher's office (x5-1880 or simon.limage@mail.house.gov) or Aaron Cutler with Rep. Pombo's office (x5-1947 or aaron.cutler@mail.house.gov).

HIGHER EDUCATION MARK UP SPANS THREE DAYS

The House Education and Workforce Committee completed the second day of marking up a renewal to the Higher Education Act (HEA) on July 21st 2005, with a third of the votes on amendments expected to come and most Republican priorities still intact. Most amendments were approved by party-line votes with Committee Chair John Boehner (OH) giving little ground to opposition attempts to increase the cost of the revenue-neutral bill. Efforts to increase Pell grant maximums, boost teacher training, impose a lower fixed rate of interest for student borrowers, and to establish an incentive program to encourage students to participate in the Direct Loans program all failed. Rep. Boehner was partially rebuffed by passage of a Michael Castle (DE) amendment limiting for-profit college participation to campus-based aid programs under HEA, and prohibiting for-profit eligibility for federal funds outside HEA's jurisdiction.

Amendments to the College Access and Opportunity Act (HR 609) are being considered on a section by section basis. The first day of debate focused on the issue of allowing proprietary schools to compete with publically funded colleges and universities for federal funds. Current law enables proprietary schools to qualify for federal funds only after certain conditions are met. The Subcommittee approved version of HR 609 would amend the law by instituting a single definition for the treatment of all public and private institutions of higher learning and thereby eliminate the advantage currently held by public schools. Because of strong bipartisan opposition to a clean single definition's institution, the committee approved by voice vote an amendment offered by Michael Castle that would limit for-profit participation to HEA's campus based aid participation and bar their eligibility for research or other grants administered by other federal agencies. Amendment language allows other authorization committees with appropriate jurisdictional authority to alter the scope of the single definition.

A \$3.4 billion amendment to increase pay and training for teachers offered by the committee's Ranking Member George Miller (Martinez), failed by a vote of 20 to 26. So too did an effort by Mr. Miller to increase the maximum Pell grant by \$500 over the next five years and cap student loan interest rates at 6.8 percent. Speaking in support of his amendment, Mr. Miller noted that the real value of the grant had declined in constant dollars to less than its worth in 1975, seriously inhibiting a student's ability to keep pace with the cost of college tuition. He also suggested that HR 609 unfairly redirects \$11.5 billion in savings to be used for reconciliation of the federal debt, rather than recycling those funds back into higher education. "You can't say this is the most important thing, and treat it in this fashion," said Mr. Miller. Senior committee member and bill co-author Howard "Buck" McKeon (Santa Clarita) acknowledged the challenge of cost inflation, however he maintained that colleges and universities are partly responsible for tuition hikes, and that HR 609 goes as far as possible to serve students under the current budgetary climate, "We all have to deal with the realities we are facing right now" said Rep. McKeon.

The committee voted to give students the choice between a fixed or variable rate for loans after a second degree Miller amendment reducing the spread between the two rates by 0.5 percentage points

failed. Some committee members were concerned that changes to the formula that determines the rate of student loan interest could force banks and lenders to disengage from participation. An amendment that would have established a competitive program to encourage students to enroll in the most efficient student loan program was offered by Thomas Petri (WI), and failed by a vote of 20 to 26. The Student Aid Reward (STAR) Act Amendment indirectly sought to provide an incentive for students to participate in Direct Loans (DL) as opposed to Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) that are more expensive to administer by private entities. According to Rep. Miller, who spoke in support of the amendment, STAR would free up \$17 billion in college scholarship aid over 10 years. The extra money would be used to supplement the Pell grant awards of eligible students at campuses which select the more efficient grant program. Chair Boehner asserted that the bill would institute a form of legalized bribery and that savings from the DL program have been overstated.

Throughout debate Democrats consistently protested that passage of HR 609 would lead to the loss of national competitiveness and threaten national security and that budget reconciliation was unfairly being borne on the backs of students and graduates. Republicans stressed the need to be responsible with taxpayer money and proposed that the bill successfully expands access for low and moderate income students.

The third day of mark up is expected to resume on July 22nd, at 9:30 a.m., at which point members of the committee will vote on remaining amendments and report a bill to the House floor.

For more information on this mark up and HR 609, visit the House Education and Workforce website at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/>

BRAC COMMISSION ADDS THREE CALIFORNIA BASES TO LIST FOR CLOSURE/REALIGNMENT CONSIDERATION

In a meeting of the full Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission on Tuesday, three California sites, the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute in Monterey and the Navy Broadway Complex in San Diego, were added to the list of military installations being considered for closure and realignment. At the same time, a number of California bases that many considered in danger of being added to the list, including the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, were not, making it extremely unlikely that those bases will be closed or realigned during this base closure round.

The BRAC Commission used its meeting to vote on whether to add any of 14 installations to the BRAC list for further consideration. A vote in favor of adding a site to the list, which requires seven of the nine commissioners, means only that the Commission would like to undertake a more formal investigation into adding a base to their final recommendations for closure and realignment. Bases added to the list may ultimately be closed or realigned if the Commission recommends such action at their August 22 meeting.

For the California bases added to the list, the outlook is mixed. The Navy Broadway Complex, added to the list in an 8 to 1 vote, may very well be closed. The City of San Diego would like to use the Complex, which is located in the valuable North Embarcadero property, for development purposes. Currently, the Complex houses the Navy's Southwest regional administrative offices.

The fates of the Defense Language Institute (DLI), operated by the Army, and the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) are more complicated and intrinsically related. Since the 1993 base closure process, the Department of Defense has eyed the two schools for closure, arguing that the same functions could be accomplished at any number of private or public universities across the country. In the current base closure round, both schools barely escaped making the closure and realignment list in last second decisions by DoD. Their addition to the list, along with the addition of the Air Force Institute of Technology in Ohio, (all by 8 to 0 votes) fuels speculation that the three schools may be

combined into a single armed forces postgraduate school. It is possible, if not likely, that the site of the new school could be in Monterey; such a move would limit relocation costs significantly. However, the Commission insisted that all options would be considered. Commissioner Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton (USAF Ret.), referring to the high cost of living in Monterey, asked "Why move to a high-cost area?...Instead of studying to go to Monterey, we should study where to go." That sentiment was echoed by other Commissioners. In the next month before the Commission's final votes, Commissioners and Commission staff will visit the three schools and determine their fate.

The California base most relieved by the Commission's votes may be the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. Many Commissioners and interested parties, citing the base's high cost of living and proximity to the San Diego airport, had broached the idea of closing the base. However, the Commission ultimately determined that the military value of having a second recruit depot (the other being Parris Island in South Carolina) in the U.S. precluded any savings that might have stemmed from closing the base.

Over the next month, the Commission will finalize recommendations. On August 22, it will meet to vote on all of the recommendations on the Secretary's list. The Commission's final recommendations will be transmitted to the President by September 8. The President must approve or disapprove of the recommendations by September 22. If he approves, the recommendations are transmitted to Congress, which has 45 days to approve or disapprove of them. If the President disapproves, the Commission has until October 22 to submit revised recommendations to the President, who again must approve or disapprove of the list. If he disapproves, the process dies; if he approves, Congress has the same 45 days to approve or disapprove of the list. In past base closure rounds with similar processes, the President and Congress have always approved the Commission's recommendations.

HOUSE CAFTA VOTE MAY OCCUR NEXT WEEK; OUTCOME UNCERTAIN

Rep. Bill Thomas (Bakersfield), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, indicated on Wednesday that a House vote on the DR-CAFTA Trade Agreement implementing legislation (H.R. 3045) may be scheduled for Wednesday, July 27. House leaders acknowledge, however, that passage of the agreement is not certain.

The Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement will control trade between the United States and the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras. Although the Administration completed the Agreement a year ago, concerns in Congress about U.S. job losses in the textile and sugar industries, and workers' rights in the Central American countries have delayed consideration of the implementing legislation. Almost all Democrats are committed to voting against the Agreement. In addition, many Republicans have been reluctant to support the legislation because of the potential impact on the textile and sugar industries. House leaders are working with these groups to alleviate concerns, but some members remain uncommitted.

Other Republicans have used the CAFTA legislation as a bargaining chip to get floor consideration of legislation to crack down on China's unfair trade practices. Chairman Thomas has agreed to bring to the floor before the CAFTA vote a bill that would allow the U.S. to impose countervailing duties on Chinese goods produced with subsidies. The bill also contains other provisions aimed at punishing China. On a related issue, China announced on Thursday that it would stop pegging its currency, the yuan, to the U.S. dollar and instead allow it to float within a narrow range. China's currency manipulation has been another sore point with many U.S. representatives.

Despite these efforts to garner reluctant votes, final passage of the bill remains uncertain. Chairman Thomas has already delayed filing the Committee Report to accompany the bill. Because the legislation is considered privileged under the fast-track trade agreement law that governs it, any member may

request an up or down vote on the bill within two days after the report is filed, and a vote on the bill must occur within 15 days of the report's filing. Current plans are to file the report on Friday.

The Senate passed its CAFTA implementing legislation on June 30, by a vote of 54-44.

TEA-21 REAUTHORIZATION GETS EXTENSION NUMBER TEN

On Thursday, July 21, 2005, leaders of the conference committee tasked with resolving differences between House and Senate versions of the highway and transit reauthorization bill were unable to finalize a bill, and Congress passed a tenth short-term extension of transportation spending authority.

Since September 2003, highway and transit programs have been operating through a series of nine temporary extensions, most recently including an apparently overly optimistic two-day extension that expired at midnight on July 21. Finding themselves some distance from an accord, the conferees agreed Thursday to extend funding through Wednesday, July 27.

Conferees are moving closer to resolving differences over H.R.3, the bill to reauthorize the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and once--wide funding gaps have narrowed. Earlier this year, the White House had called the Senate-approved \$295 billion transportation bill's price tag too high, preferring House's \$284 billion version. The White House had threatened to veto both measures: the Senate's because it exceeded President Bush's \$284 billion cap, and the House because of objectionable funding equity language that violates a separate White House principal.

Among key concerns now is the split between highway and transit spending. Historically, the split has approximated 80 percent highway / 20 percent transit, give or take a bit. Transit advocates have been unhappy with recent proposals to set transit funding at approximately 18.6 percent of total funds.

Also in flux is the mechanism and percentage to be applied to the minimum guarantee (MG) to states (the equity bonus program in the Senate version). Current law requires states receive back in highway spending at least 90.5 percent of the amount attributable to each state in federal gas taxes and other highway-related revenues. A number of "donor states" have sought to alter the MG formula to raise the percentage, perhaps to 92 percent, or higher still.

Reportedly, a similar impasse befell conferees meeting to resolve differences over transit provisions.

The transportation extension bill, H.R. 3377, funds highway and transit programs at levels comparable to current TEA-21 law levels for six more days.

For additional information regarding transportation issues and California, visit the California Institute's transportation page, <http://www.calinst.org/transpo.htm> . Linked there are two reports regarding federal formula grant programs related to transportation (one on highway programs, one on transit), developed in a joint venture with the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) under the *Federal Formula Grants and California* project, at <http://www.calinst.org/formulas.htm> .

SENATE ENVIRONMENT REPORTS MUNICIPAL WATER GRANTS BILL

On Wednesday, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved legislation (S. 1400) that would target about \$35 billion in federal grants to help municipal water agencies upgrade their aging infrastructure. The bill was reported by voice vote. The grant program is intended to supplement revolving loans available under the Safe Drinking Water Act (P.L. 93-523).

During consideration of the bill, the Committee approved an amendment offered by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (CT) that would apply Davis-Bacon prevailing wage laws to any project receiving federal funds. The Committee defeated another amendment offered by Sen. Barbara Boxer. The amendment would have required the U.S. Geological Survey to undertake an assessment of U.S. locations that have been contaminated by perchlorate. Perchlorate is a component of rocket fuel that has contaminated groundwater and harmed individuals. The Boxer amendment was defeated by a vote of 5-13.

PPIC RELEASES SPECIAL SURVEY ON CALIFORNIANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

On Thursday, the Public Policy Institute of California released a Special Survey showing that Californians “want the state to act on its own” to address global warming, the environment, and energy concerns. The Survey, made possible by funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, found that 86 percent of Californians believe that global warming “will affect current or future generations. 57 percent of respondents “believe the effects are already being felt,” while 75 percent believe that “the effects of global warming on the state’s economy and quality of life will be very or somewhat serious.” 54 percent of those polled express a preference for “their state government to develop its own policies, apart from the federal government, to address the issue of global warming.” The Survey includes responses to a wide variety of questions concerning environmental policy, as well as approval ratings for President Bush and Governor Schwarzenegger.

To view the full Survey, visit PPIC’s website at <http://www.ppic.org> .

SENATE CONDUCTS HEARING ON CALIFORNIA LAND BILL

On Wednesday, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources’s Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests conducted a hearing that considered, among other bills, H.R. 1101, a bill to revoke public lands in the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. The Senate Subcommittee hearing on H.R. 1101 included testimony from Lawrence E. Benna, the Deputy Director of Operations for the Bureau of Land Management, supporting the revocation of 140.2 acres of land from the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge. The land in question is used as a recreation area and was erroneously included in the original designation of the area as a wildlife refuge. Cibola National Wildlife Refuge is in Imperial County along portions of the Colorado River. The House and Senate passed versions of the bill in the 108th Congress, but because of a Senate amendment, the bill was never enacted. The bill is expected to pass in this Congress.

HOUSE TO CONSIDER CALVERT NASA REAUTHORIZATION BILL ON FRIDAY

On Friday, July 22, 2005, the House of Representatives is expected to take up H.R. 3070, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2005. The bill, sponsored by House Science Subcommittee on Space Chairman Ken Calvert (Corona), would renew federal spending authority for NASA through FY 2007. It was marked up and unanimously approved by the full Science Committee on July 14.

During floor debate, the House is expected to consider an amendment by Rep. Jerry Costello (IL) to limit NASA’s ability to use of foreign contractors except for those related to activities of the International Space Station (ISS).

Upon Committee approval, Chairman Calvert commented, “This bill defines the future of NASA and provides strong Congressional oversight to an agency in transition,” and he added, “I am delighted that we were able to negotiate a bipartisan bill and I know we will continue to work together when we consider the bill on the House floor.”

The bill would not prevent Shuttle retirement until the Crew Exploration Vehicle is in operation, yet it would not mandate Shuttle retirement in 2010, leaving the bill silent on the issue. It would also endorse the goals of returning Americans to the Moon by 2020 and of a human repair mission to the Hubble Space Telescope, does not mandate research topics for aeronautics and instead lists options for aeronautics research, and makes it more difficult for NASA to transfer money among accounts.

For more information, visit <http://www.house.gov/science> .

HOUSE SCIENCE COMMITTEE HOLDS HYDROGEN, FUEL CELL HEARING

On Wednesday, the House Science Subcommittees on Research and Science conducted a joint hearing on advancements in hydrogen technology entitled “Fueling The Future: On The Road To The Hydrogen Economy.” The hearing functioned as an annual means for the Subcommittee to monitor scientific advances in hydrogen fuel technology with an eye toward crafting helpful legislation. The hearing featured testimony from Douglas L. Faulkner, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Dr. David L. Bodde, a Professor and Senior Fellow at the International Center for Automotive Research and the Arthur M. Spiro Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, Mark Chernoby, the Vice President for Advanced Vehicle Engineering at DaimlerChrysler Corporation, George W. Crabtree, a Senior Scientist and Director of the Materials Science Division at Argonne National Laboratory, and Professor John B. Heywood, the Director of the Center for 21st Century Energy and the Sloan Automotive Laboratory at MIT.

All of the witnesses highlighted recent advancements in hydrogen storage, fuel cell durability and cost, and hydrogen production. However, despite advances, the witnesses emphasized that hydrogen technology will not become commercially viable until the costs of fuel cells and hydrogen storage lower significantly. Acting Assistant Secretary Faulkner pinpointed 2010 and 2025 as two dates that will be pivotal for assessing the progress of the hydrogen industry. Most of the witnesses could not envision hydrogen usage beginning to replace standard fossil fuel consuming automobiles until at least 2025.

For the full testimony of witnesses, visit the House Science Committee’s website at <http://www.house.gov/science/>.

PPIC LUNCHEON BRIEFING ON JULY 26 RE CALIFORNIA’S MEDI-CAL PROGRAM

On Tuesday, July 26, 2005, from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. in Room B-354 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) and the California Institute will host a luncheon briefing entitled *California’s Medi-Cal Program: Can Costs Be Controlled?*

According to a new study by PPIC, over the next ten years, California’s costs under the Medi-Cal program (which administers federal Medicaid funds) are projected to grow at a faster rate than state revenues. The analysis also reveals that most Medi-Cal spending is concentrated among a small number of recipients – 5 percent of Medi-Cal enrollees incur more than 60 percent of all costs. For substantial savings, the analysis finds that the state would have to lower the cost of long-term care for the elderly, services for the disabled, and hospital stays for the seriously ill.

PPIC finds that rapid inflation in health care costs – not increases in the number of enrollees – is the driving force behind mounting program expenses. The \$12 billion the state now spends annually on Medi-Cal is expected to reach nearly \$29 billion annually by 2015 – yet California’s revenues are projected to grow more slowly. “The budget disparity is notable. There are really only three strategies to address it,” says PPIC research fellow Hans Johnson, who co-authored the study with SPHERE researchers Thomas MaCurdy, Raymond Chan, Rodney Chun, and Margaret O’Brien-Strain. “The state can raise taxes, cut Medi-Cal spending, or take money from other programs and move it into Medi-Cal. None of these are easy.”

To attend this luncheon briefing, please reply (acceptances only, thank you) to 202-546-3700, or send email to ransdell@calinst.org. Copies of the report will be available at the briefing, and it may be viewed online at <http://www.ppic.org>.

Tuesday’s event will be the second in a new monthly series of lunch briefings to present PPIC findings. It was kicked off by the *California 2025* presentation in June. An August 11 briefing will focus on water issues.

REDISTRICTING INITIATIVE PLAN HITS LEGAL SNAG

On Thursday, July 21, 2005, a California judge ruled against allowing Proposition 77, Governor Schwarzenegger's redistricting proposal, to appear on the November 2005 special election ballot.

Ruling that there was a discrepancy between the version circulated for voter signatures and the version presented to the Attorney General, Judge Gail Ohanesian struck down one measure out of the planned three-initiative package that was to be voted on this November 8. The proposal would have shifted authority for redrawing Congressional and State Legislative districts from the Legislature to a panel of retired judges. The ruling is expected to be appealed.

SENATE TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS MOVES FORWARD

On July 19, 2005, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary and Housing and Urban Development, Judiciary and District of Columbia reported the Fiscal Year 2006 spending bill for the federal departments under its jurisdiction. Overall, the bill appropriates discretionary spending of \$65.37 billion. The bill represents a \$2.8 billion increase over the \$62.6 billion appropriated in FY 2005 and exceeds the President's budget request by almost \$5 billion.

The Chair's mark provides \$40.2 billion for highway expenses, an increase of \$5.1 billion from FY 2005's appropriation and \$5.2 billion over the President's Budget. The Senate bill provides \$490 million for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is awarded \$562 million more than the amount received in the previous year to bring its spending total to \$8.2 billion for FY2006, \$427 million higher than the President's request, under the Senate Subcommittee plan.

The Senate Subcommittee bill provides \$14.257 billion for aviation programs. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants are split, with \$8.176 billion assigned to FAA operations, \$3.5 billion for the Airport Improvement Program, and \$2.4 billion for facilities and equipment expenses through the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The Senate bill provides \$110 million for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program which supports air services to smaller communities.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is fed \$1.6 billion under the Senate plan, of which \$1.4 billion is provided to fund Amtrak activities and operations, an increase of \$200 million from the previous year's enacted level. The Senate bill retains language in prior appropriations law that extends Amtrak operations and capital expense oversight and assurance of route continuation to the Secretary of Transportation under bill language. The Secretary is also required to establish a fair competitive bidding procedure to show whether competitiveness will improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of passenger rail services for rail riders.

To view further bill details, visit <http://appropriations.senate.gov/> .

THREE NEW APPROPRIATIONS ANALYSES AVAILABLE ON INSTITUTE'S WEBSITE: HOUSE LABOR-H, HOUSE INTERIOR-ENVIRONMENT, AND SENATE AGRICULTURE

An analysis by the California Institute of the California implications of the House FY06 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations, House FY06 Interior and Environment Appropriations and Senate FY06 Agriculture Appropriations are now available on our website at: <http://www.calinst.org> .

Please note that all three of the Special Reports are available in a new Excel format, in which the appropriations are displayed in a spreadsheet interspersed with relevant information and quotations from the bills' reports. The California Institute would greatly appreciate feedback on the usefulness of the Excel format, particularly as it compares to the previous textual format. Please email feedback to Mary Beth Sullivan at sullivan@calinst.org .