

County Of Sonoma Agenda Item Summary Report

Clerk of the Board Use Only
Meeting Date **Held Until**
 / / / /
Agenda Item No: **Agenda Item No:**
 _____ _____

Department: County Administrator's Office

4/5 Vote Not Required

Contact:
Jim Leddy

Phone:
(707) 565-2190

Board Date:
11/10/2009

Deadline for Board Action:

AGENDA SHORT TITLE: House Resolution 3837 - The Strengthening and Updating Resources and Equipment Act (SURE Act) of 2009.

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION: Authorize the Chair to execute a letter of support for H.R. 3837 to be sent to members of the County's federal delegation.

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT - None.

Explanation (if required): None.

Prior Board Action: None

Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: The County's position on this issue will not be transmitted to federal policy makers.

Background: Since 2002, state and local governments have utilized the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) to purchase highly-technical homeland security equipment. The equipment has provided first responders with the necessary capabilities to respond to local emergency preparedness needs. Much of this homeland security equipment requires annual maintenance in order to remain operational. Prior to September 22, 2009, FEMA allowed state and local governments to use their annual SHSGP and UASI funding to maintain equipment that was purchased in prior fiscal years.

On September 22nd, 2009, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Grants Program Directorate (FEMA GPD) announced a shift in policy regarding the permissible uses of preparedness grants. The announcement declared that grantees could only use preparedness grants for maintenance agreements, user fees and other sustainment costs on equipment that was purchased if the aforementioned costs fell within the equipment's performance period. This new policy would limit state, local and tribal governments' ability to use FEMA preparedness grants to maintain and upgrade critical homeland security equipment by preventing the use of funds across grant years.

On October 19th, the National Governor's Association (NGA) called on the Department of Homeland Security to reverse this new policy as it violates the original Congressional intent of the funding and would hamper the ability of state and local governments to maintain vital homeland security equipment. Due to the potential impact to counties, the National Association of Counties has also taken a strong position of opposition as well. Both organizations are lobbying the Homeland Security Department to reverse the policy.

In response to this new policy, H.R. 3837 was introduced by Congresswoman Mary Jo Kilroy, 15th District of Ohio. The bill was introduced on October 15th and is currently in the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response. H.R. 3837 would reverse the FEMA GPD policy and allow the continued use of preparedness grants to maintain previously purchased equipment. NACo has endorsed H.R. 3837.

According to the Department of Emergency Services, if this policy is allowed to stand the impact on Sonoma County emergency preparedness would entail potentially decreasing local response capability to events such as a large scale hazardous material release requiring mass decontamination, or a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive (CBRNE) incident. Many of the equipment items used for these types of responses have limited effective shelf lives and grant funds have been used over the years to purchase and maintain the appropriate stockpiles necessary for an effective response. Much of this response capability did not exist locally prior to Homeland Security Grant funding and the costs to maintain and sustain this type of response have not been incorporated into our first responder budgets.

Recommendation:

Authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for H.R. 3837 to be sent to members of the County's federal delegation.

Attachments: H.R. 3837, Draft letter of support.

On File With Clerk: None.

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Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote: