



City of San Antonio

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DEPARTMENT: Government and Public Affairs

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Jeff Coyle

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

115th Federal Legislative Program Amendments

SUMMARY:

Proposed amendments to the City of San Antonio’s 115th Federal Legislative Program

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Development of the City’s federal initiatives for the 115th Congress began in August 2016 in collaboration with City departments and the City’s Federal Consultant team, and City Council adopted the 115th Federal Legislative Program on January 12, 2017. The 115th Federal Legislative Program focuses on three City legislative priorities and twelve legislative and federal agency initiatives.

The City’s Federal Priorities include federal funding and/or legislative action for the following initiatives: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization; Military Protection; and Transportation Funding. Legislative and agency initiatives included in the 115th Program focus on issues that align with City priorities

and enhance the City's continued commitment to leverage national resources and partnerships. The City's federal legislative efforts include the protection of municipal interests, identification of federal funding to support local investments, and advocacy to ensure that federal resources continue to be available for San Antonio.

On January 20, 2017, Donald J. Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. The new administration's agenda provides a break from many of the previous administrations' policies and budget priorities. As such, potential legislative reforms that were not previously up for discussion - such as the possible renegotiation of the North America Free Trade Agreement - are now front and center in the Congressional discourse.

To adapt to changing conditions in the federal government and better address the issues of importance to the San Antonio City Council, staff recommends four amendments to the 115th Federal Legislative Program. These amendments will provide staff with direction to work with the Federal Consultant team and the Congressional delegation to advocate on behalf of the City on issues of importance to City Council.

ISSUE:

Staff proposes amending the 115th Federal Legislative Program to include four additional items: (1) addressing the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); (2) preparation for a possible round of Base Realignment & Closure (BRAC); (3) support for anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling programs and grant funding; and (4) support for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival Program (DACA).

North American Free Trade Agreement

Staff recommends adding the renegotiation of NAFTA as a City of San Antonio Federal Priority. This amendment will position the City to continue to work with the business community, stakeholders and the Congressional Delegation to advocate for the modernization and improvement of NAFTA, and to ensure NAFTA continues to strengthen the local economy.

In May 2017, the United States began the process to renegotiate NAFTA. The notice triggered a 90-day consultation period after which negotiations between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada could begin. Negotiations began in August and efforts are underway to reach agreement on changes to the trade agreement by the end of 2017, as well as passage by the three countries' legislative bodies by early 2018.

San Antonio, regional and statewide stakeholders recognize that NAFTA has resulted in significant economic benefit to the local and state economy. The renegotiation of NAFTA presents an opportunity to update and improve the agreement, in recognition of fundamental changes to industry and business that have occurred since the original agreement was signed twenty-three years ago.

Base Realignment & Closure (BRAC)

Military Protection is already included as a priority in the City's 115th Federal Program. However, with the possibility of a new round of Base Realignment & Closure (BRAC) during the next several years, staff recommends amending the Military Protection language to specifically discuss BRAC and the City's desire to maintain and grow the military missions in San Antonio. This amendment will help ensure the City is positioned to prepare for and respond to a BRAC.

Since City Council adoption of the 115th Federal Legislative Program in January 2017, President Trump has expressed support for a BRAC. Also, Senators John McCain and Jack Reed, chairman and ranking member of

the Senate Armed Services Committee, respectively, proposed an amendment to the Defense Force & Infrastructure Review Act of 2017 to lay the groundwork for a BRAC. Joint Base San Antonio's (JBSA) installations contribute nearly \$50 billion annually to the local and state economy. JBSA has a footprint of 55,000 acres, employs approximately 80,000 personnel and trains 152,000 students a year.

This amendment will ensure the City is equipped to support actions that will increase Joint Base San Antonio's (JBSA) military value by promoting the strategic importance of JBSA's current, unique military missions that are indispensable to national defense as well as highlighting San Antonio's military friendly atmosphere and superb training environment and facilities. These activities will help ensure San Antonio will be in the best possible position to absorb additional military missions from other military installations during a future BRAC.

Anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling support & grant funding

Staff recommends the addition of language in the 115th Federal Program to support federal programs and funding that help combat human trafficking and smuggling. The I-35 corridor through Texas continues to be utilized as a human trafficking and smuggling route. In July, a group of immigrants were found in a locked truck trailer after having been left trapped for hours. Many were rescued but ten individuals ultimately died due to the heat in the trailer.

The San Antonio Police Department coordinated and assists state and federal officials in anti-trafficking initiatives and has participated in the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign to combat human trafficking. Through the proposed amendment the City would further explore opportunities to receive support from the federal government to stop human trafficking and smuggling in the region.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival Program (DACA)

Finally, staff recommends an amendment to the federal program in support of extending the DACA Program or implementing a long-term solution for certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. This amendment will position the City to join others advocating for the extension of the program.

Earlier this month, President Trump announced his decision to end the DACA program. On September 5, 2017, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Duke issued a memorandum rescinding the June 2012 memo that established DACA, and setting forward a plan for phasing out DACA over the next six months. DACA was established by the Obama Administration in June 2012 and allows certain individuals who entered the country as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit. Approximately 800,000 such young people were enrolled in the program as of 2017. According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, if DACA were to end, there would be 645,145 unemployed DACA recipients and \$3.4 billion in unnecessary turnover costs for business and employers. Eight-seven percent of DACA recipients are currently employed with businesses in the United States.

The DACA Program has bipartisan support in Congress. Many in Congress are advocating for a permanent legislative solution for individuals currently covered by DACA. This amendment to the 115th Federal Program will equip the City to support Congressional action to extend DACA. The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) and the National League of Cities (NLC) are active advocates of DACA and have asked Congress for the extension of DACA and a long-term immigration solution for these individuals.

ALTERNATIVES:

IGR Committee could choose to not accept recommended amendments and/or propose additional amendments to the 115th Federal Program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with this item.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends Intergovernmental Relations Committee support of four amendments to the City's 115th Federal Program and for these amendments to go to full City Council for consideration.