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## MEMORANDUM

TO Legislative Committee

FROM Brent R. Heberlee

DATE February 2, 2023

RE Federal Legislative Update

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This memo provides a Federal Legislative Update on the items appearing on the agenda for the February 9, 2023, Special Legislative Committee meeting.

### 1. Legislative Update

The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress is off to a slow start as the House and Senate continue to organize committees and attend to other housekeeping activities. Rep. Panetta will continue to serve on the committees on Ways and Means, Armed Services, and Agriculture (pending a waiver request). Rep. Lofgren was selected to be the Ranking Member of the Committee on Science, Space and Technology, and she will also continue to serve as a senior member of the Judiciary Committee. Senator Feinstein will maintain her seats on the Judiciary and Appropriations committees, and Senator Padilla will continue to serve on the Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, Homeland Security, and Budget committees.

President Biden is expected to transmit his FY2024 budget proposal to Congress in early March, which will kick-start the annual appropriations process. The House Republican caucus voted earlier this year to continue to permit members to submit community project funding, or earmark, requests to the Appropriations Committee, but House leadership is planning to put additional restrictions on this process that will further limit the size and scope of member requests. The Senate process is expected to remain largely unchanged from the last two years. The bigger challenge is whether Congress will be able to enact any FY2024 appropriations bills in light of divided government and the hyper-partisan atmosphere around the debt limit discussions.

2. Winter Storms – Federal Response

Under the President’s major disaster declaration for the California Winter Storms issued on January 14, federal funding for the approved FEMA cost-share programs was made available at 75% of the total eligible costs. The President issued a subsequent order on January 18 that increased the federal share to 100% of the total eligible costs for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct federal assistance under the Public Assistance program, for 60 days from the start of the incident period – December 27, 2022. Monterey County is currently eligible for all types of FEMA Public Assistance for emergency and permanent repairs to public infrastructure, and as of February 2, FEMA has approved nearly \$11.5 million in assistance to 1,874 individuals for housing and other needs throughout California.

3. U.S. Forest Service Wildfire Mitigation Projects

The U.S. Forest Service recently announced an investment of \$490 million to reduce wildfire risk in 11 high risk landscapes across the western United States. Five of the 11 new projects funded are in California, and one project includes portions of the Los Padres National Forest in Monterey County. This funding will support strategic forest thinning, removal of hazardous vegetation, controlled burns, and infrastructure upgrades to reduce the risk of wildfires and make communities more resilient in the event that fires do occur. Additional information about these projects can be found [here](#).

4. NACo Legislative Conference

The NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., is scheduled for February 11-14. In addition to conference activities, the County delegation will have an opportunity to schedule additional meetings with members of the congressional delegation and federal agency officials.