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JOE A. MARTINEZ, CHAIRMAN  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DISTRICT 11

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COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE

# Memorandum

To: Honorable Vice-Chairman Dennis C. Moss and  
Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: Joe A. Martinez, Chairman 

Date: December 10, 2004

Re: Governmental Structure Task Force

For some time now, there has been an ongoing debate in Miami-Dade County that has been fueled more by the media than the community we represent regarding changes to our governmental process in Miami-Dade County as it relates to procurement of goods and services. Likewise, arguments regarding a governance structure for our airport that are heavy on opinion and light on factual justification continue to be made. While it is significant to note that these issues did not surface until our governmental structure changed to a single member district system, which is representative of our diverse ethnic, racial and cultural communities, it is nevertheless an issue that can and should be examined.

Recent media accounts have also asserted that our new Mayor intends to engage in negotiations with the Board of County Commissioners, to implement specific changes that would shift the authority on procurement matters from the elected members of the Commission, to appointed members of the County's staff. I welcome the opportunity to discuss any issue with our new Mayor, but I firmly believe that any "negotiations" regarding structural changes to our citizens' government, should not be conducted behind closed doors. Our government should always be open to a healthy debate regarding any proposed changes in its structure. This debate should occur in a forum where a comprehensive analysis of the facts provide the foundation for the options we evaluate; where our community is an integral part of the discussion; and where arguments and opinions are aired in the Sunshine. That is how our last Charter Review Committee was able to reach consensus on recent amendments to the County charter that were approved by Miami-Dade County electors.

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Therefore, today I have filed a resolution to create the Task Force on Governmental Structure in Miami-Dade County. This resolution, if adopted by you, will create a Task Force that shall consist of the Vice-Chairman of the County Commission, who shall serve as the Chair of the Task Force, and three additional County Commissioners selected by the Chairman of the County Commission. The Mayor shall, at his discretion, serve as the fifth voting member of the Task Force. Furthermore, the Chair of the Task Force may, at his or her discretion, create a Citizens' Advisory Committee to assist the Task Force. The Chair of the Task Force shall appoint the members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee. The Task Force will be staffed by the County Manager and the County Attorney. The Task Force's first charge will be to create a set of criteria to identify well-functioning and efficient municipal and county governments. This criteria may include such things as bond rating, efficiency awards or recognitions, success in obtaining Federal and State funds, and as well as other criteria that may be deemed by the members to be objective measures of a well-functioning local governmental structure. The Task Force shall then evaluate the different major municipal and county governments throughout the United States and apply these criteria to evaluate the efficiency of these different governmental structures. The analysis should include an evaluation of governments that vest procurement authority in elected officials, as well as appointed members of staff. It should also evaluate jurisdictions that vest authority over air and seaports in elected bodies, as well as appointed members.

Finally, an analysis of the occasions in which our elected Commission has rejected the County Manager's recommendations on procurement matters in the last five to ten years should be detailed in total number of procurement items, percentage of total procurements and percentage of procurement dollars expended. This important data will show to what degree our government is currently guided by our staff decision-making process. At the conclusion of this analysis, this data will be compiled and disseminated through the County's communications department. ~~This will lay the foundation to engage in an inclusive discussion in which the public can participate.~~ The Task Force shall set a schedule of public hearings in order to ensure that all sectors of our diverse community have an opportunity to be heard.

At the conclusion of the public hearing phase, the Task Force shall prepare a report for the County Commission's consideration that will include a summary of the evaluation of different municipal governmental structures throughout our country, and the opinions of our constituents gleaned from the public hearing process.

As the newly elected Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, I share your vision of open and representative government. This Task Force process is one more way of implementing that vision, by ensuring that our community's debate on these important issues is conducted in the Sunshine and with advice and input from the people we represent.

I trust that the Mayor will agree that having a forum where the County Commission and he can publicly set forth their positions and obtain input from those who elected us to serve, will help to promote an environment of transparency, inclusiveness and respectful exchange of ideas.

I look forward to continue working with you on behalf of those we represent.

JM/jim

Cc: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez  
Honorable Harvey Ruvlin, Clerk of the Court  
George Burgess, County Manager  
Robert Ginsburg, County Attorney