

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Dear Fellow Residents of Miami-Dade County:

My goal for the FY 2013-14 Budget was to keep operating tax rates flat and maintaining your services. We succeeded.

The budget process was a challenging one. Though property values did improve, especially in our coastal cities, the overall Countywide, UMSA, Fire and Library increases were very limited. Unfortunately, we were also faced with unexpected costs imposed by unfunded State mandates of approximately \$30 million. Despite that, we were able to hold services together, keep reserves at responsible levels, and continue to advance our capital development programs. This budget balances our core services with an eye toward achieving sustainability of operations and ensuring that our community is prepared for future economic development opportunities.

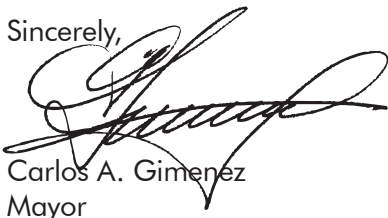
As we move into FY 2013-14, however, we are addressing additional financial challenges because of the number and amount of refunds to property owners contesting the value of their properties. Each of our four taxing jurisdictions suffered losses in FY 2012-13 that must be absorbed in the current budget. To mitigate this impact, department directors have already been instructed to postpone filling vacant positions and reduce their expenditures to the extent possible.

It is important to note that this budget, which was approved and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, is based upon the continuation of certain concessions negotiated with our employees' labor unions, including the 5% contribution to the cost of group health that has been paid by our employees for the past several years. The \$56 million cost of returning this contribution to employees just for the remainder of FY 2013-14 is not included in the adopted budget. In order to maintain a balanced budget if the 5% contribution were to end, departmental expenditures would need to be cut resulting in significant service reductions and layoffs for this year. Using reserves or any other one-time revenues instead to pay for costs that will continue beyond this year is not only irresponsible, but unacceptable as it makes next year's budget challenges even worse. Looking towards next year's budget, absent dramatic growth in property values or tax rate increases, significant changes to the services provided by the County will be required to balance the FY 2014-15 budget. While the economy is improving, we do not anticipate an increase in revenue levels in the intermediate future. We must continue to make tough decisions.

Specific to the Library District, services will remain in place this year by utilizing revenues unspent from previous years, but this funding will not be available next year. I have convened, and am personally chairing a Blue Ribbon Task Force bringing together various stakeholders of our library system, and subcommittees are meeting to formulate ideas for the Task Force to consider regarding funding, service delivery, use of technology and the future of libraries. Without an infusion of funding and/or reduction in expenditures, major changes in our Library District will be necessary beginning in FY 2014-15.

I continue to fulfill the promises I made to you when I took office - to provide you with a government that is built on transparency, efficiency and fiscal responsibility. We need a government that is sustainable, one that takes an honest long-term view when it comes to our budget. I remain committed to doing all that I can to make Miami-Dade County a great place for our families now and in the future, while keeping taxes low and providing the essential services you expect from your county government. I look forward to working with the Board of County Commissioners along this path in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor