



Memorandum

TO: Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Greenberg Traurig

DATE: July 7, 2011

RE: June Report to the Board of County Commissioners

Below please find a summary of Greenberg Traurig's efforts on behalf of Miami-Dade County in June.

Overview of Legislative Activity in June

Negotiations over raising the federal debt ceiling continued to dominate the month of June. Primary focus was on the series of negotiations held between Vice President Joe Biden and leadership in the House and Senate. While the chances of striking a deal looked promising in early June, by the end of the month both parties were entrenched in their partisan ideology. Republicans maintain that entitlement spending cuts are needed to rein in the debt, while Democrats counter that the tax breaks for the wealthy should be eliminated to increase federal revenues. June ended with President Obama's verbal assault on Republicans' unwillingness to open to the possibility of tax increases.

Appropriations

Despite the continued negotiations on the federal debt limit, House Republicans continued to push appropriations bills in earnest during the month of June. The House Appropriations Committee passed both the Agriculture Appropriations Act and the Energy and Water Appropriations Act. The agriculture bill was also passed on the House floor. In keeping with the moratorium on earmarks, both bills were free of congressionally directed spending requests.

Notwithstanding calls for cuts in farm subsidies, the Agriculture Appropriations Act maintained most subsidies and instead made significant cuts to domestic and international nutrition and food aid programs. The legislation was amended on the House floor to include a highly controversial provision to prohibit the payment of funds to the government of Brazil in order to prevent the imposition of retaliatory tariffs over US cotton subsidies. The provision drew criticism from the House Agriculture Committee

chairman who believes that the issue is one for the authorizers to consider, not the appropriators.

The Senate has yet to draft and markup the FY 2012 companions to the House bills, instead waiting to determine the outcome of the negotiations on the debt limit. GT will continue to follow the process and keep the county informed as both chambers continue to move through the appropriations process.

Immigration

In June, Congress rekindled the long-stalled debate over immigration reform. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) introduced new legislation with a four year old objective: to provide for comprehensive immigration reform. The bill, S. 1258 (the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2011), was introduced with 7 cosponsors including Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). It was subsequently referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill was lauded by the sponsor and Democratic leaders as a foundation for further negotiations.

Additionally, the Senate held a hearing on the DREAM Act, sponsored by Senator Durbin. Hundreds of students that would be eligible under the Act were in attendance for the hearing. In fact, so many students showed up in support that the hearing was moved to a larger, more accommodating room. Senator Durbin, the sponsor and champion of the legislation in the Senate chaired the hearing with the permission of the subcommittee's true chair- Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY). Although the bill has widespread Democratic support, the claims of its bipartisan support may have been overblown. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) stated that the bill should not be passed as a stand-alone but, but instead should only be passed as part of larger immigration reform legislation. He also called the Act a political weapon being used as a wedge in the run up to the 2012 election.

Lastly, the House Judiciary Committee held a markup in June of HR 1933, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to modify the requirements for admission of nonimmigrant nurses in health professional shortage areas. This legislation permits a one-time three-year extension of admission for nonimmigrant nurses in health professional shortage areas. Additionally, it reduces the maximum number of such visas per fiscal year to 300.

GT will continue to follow these bill and all immigration issues in order to keep the County aware of all developments and opportunities for advocacy.

Transportation

Last month GT continued to follow developments and reach out to committee staff regarding the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill. In that effort, Alan Slomowitz spoke with House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee staff regarding the status of the Recreational Trails Program. Staff was noncommittal on the inclusion of the

program in the final bill, but GT will review the draft bill expected for release on July 7, 2011. Additionally, GT monitored the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee pertaining to the drafting of their version of the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill that the Committee is scheduled to markup at the end of July. We will keep the County informed as the legislation is released in both chambers.

Media Updates

GT continues to send media updates on legislative and political issues to the County in order to ensure that the Commission and staff remain up-to-date on developments within the Beltway. Our team has continued to send those interested individuals information regarding issues such as job creation, appropriations, agriculture, and transportation, among others. We will continue to monitor the issues most relevant to the County and provide timely and accurate information in order to make certain that the County is aware of any developments which may provide an opportunity to accomplish established legislative goals.

If you have any questions, or we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.