



## Memorandum

**TO:** Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Greenberg Traurig

**DATE:** June 13, 2011

**RE:** May Report to the Board of County Commissioners

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

### *Overview of Legislative Activity in May*

In May the House and the Senate alternated weeks in recess, which meant that little legislative action was possible. However, with the country approaching its borrowing limit, Congress focused intently on negotiations to raise the federal debt limit. These negotiations were held in two separate forums. First, the Senate organized the "Gang of Six," which consisted of three Democrats and three Republicans. The Democratic control over the Senate and the chamber's filibuster rules led many to believe that these negotiations would be a bellwether for the final agreement. The group included Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), a leader among conservative budget hawks. Unfortunately Senator Coburn abandoned the group and negotiations stagnated.

The departure of Senator Coburn from the Gang of Six left the other negotiating forum with the responsibility of reaching an agreement prior to the government's default, expected to occur in August. The other group negotiating an agreement on the debt-limit is being led by Vice President Joe Biden and includes leadership from both chambers. These negotiations took on a public face in May as leadership in both chambers, and within both parties, made their demands publicly known. Although the Paul Ryan budget met with significant criticism and rebuke, Republicans maintain their negotiating position of insisting that any raise in the debt-limit be accompanied with an equal cut to federal spending. The needed increase is estimated at over \$2.5 trillion, which makes the publicly popular entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid targets for cuts. Congress and the White House continue to seek a path forward in these negotiations.

## ***Appropriations***

In the midst of the debt-limit negotiations, the House began to hold hearings at the close of the month on the FY 2012 appropriations bills. The House marked up the following appropriations bills in May: Agriculture, Defense, Energy and Water, and the Legislative Branch. Additionally, the House considered the FY 2012 Homeland Security Appropriations bill on the floor during the last week of May/first week of June. GT monitored and reviewed the Energy and Water Appropriations bill and the Agriculture Appropriations bill. The House Agriculture Appropriations bill calls for major cuts to farm subsidies. Of particular importance to the County, the bill made significant cuts to nutrition programs. These attempted cuts were rejected by members of the House Agriculture Committee, which is currently working on a draft 2012 Farm Bill. It remains to be seen whether the House leadership will be able to converge the priorities of the authorizers and the appropriators. GT will continue to follow the process and keep the county informed as the bill moves through the House.

## ***Aviation***

GT assisted Miami Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) with its activities as a member of the Gateway Airport Group. The Group consists of the largest US airports that handle the bulk of domestic and international passengers and freight. GT's efforts included attending a Group conference call to discuss policy issues and implementation of a legislative strategy plan; follow up discussions with MDAD; and preparation of a draft legislative policy paper for the Group in support of increased CBP staffing at large US airports including MIA.

We also assisted MDAD with efforts by Peruvian asparagus exporters to modify changes in APHIS fumigation procedures at MIA that reduce the shelf-life of asparagus and increase industry costs. Our efforts included discussions with MIA officials and review of materials.

Lastly, GT worked with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to gather information on the developments pertaining to the drafting of a surface transportation reauthorization bill. We also took the opportunity to advocate for the continued inclusion of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) that is critical to the County.

## ***Procurement***

In May GT was requested to review and interpret a draft executive order to determine its application, if any, to the Miami Dade Procurement Department. The executive order would require disclosure of political givings by employees of federal government contractors. However, the Procurement Department was concerned that its use of federal grants would subject the department to the proposed disclosure requirements. GT was able to determine that the executive order was specific in its application to federal agencies and those seeking to provide supplies or services to the federal government. On its face, the draft executive order does not apply to state or local governments. However,

it is merely a draft and GT will review the final version of the executive order upon release.

### ***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.