



## **Memorandum**

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

**FROM:** Greenberg Traurig

**DATE:** July 7, 2012

**RE:** June 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 June.

### ***Overview of Legislative Activity in June***

Congress continued moving through the annual appropriations cycle in June with the House Appropriations Committee reporting its versions of the FY 2013 Agriculture, Financial Services and Transportation Appropriations bills. The Senate Appropriations Committee reported its versions of the FY 2013 Financial Services and Labor HHS Appropriations bills. In general, the House's FY 2013 spending bills are at somewhat lower levels compared to the Senate's FY 2013 appropriations bills because the House decided to cut FY 2013 discretionary spending below the amount permitted in the budget agreement reached last August, which was enacted in the Budget Control Act ("BCA"). The Senate Appropriations Committee is sticking to the higher level of discretionary spending permitted in the BCA. Also, during June, the Senate after three days of debate, approved its version of a new five-year farm bill, which now awaits a conference with the House after the House passes its bill, which is expected to occur in July. In addition, Congress, in a rare display of bipartisanship, passed a \$105-billion transportation bill that reauthorizes funding for surface transportation programs through 2014. The legislation, which was signed into law by the President, also averts a doubling of interest rates for millions of college student loans that were due to take effect on July 1st

### ***Agriculture***

In June, GT continued to monitor the progress of the 2012 farm bill and meet with Congressional leaders on amendments to this legislation. On June 21 - after three days of debate and voting on more than 70 amendments (some of which made changes to eligibility and payment caps for commodity and conservation programs as well as subsidized crop insurance) the Senate approved its version of a new five-year farm bill, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S. 3240), with strong bipartisan

support. The vote was 64 to 35. The bill closely resembles the measure the Senate Agriculture Committee approved in April, with a few changes made by floor amendments that some lawmakers believe could shape an eventual House-Senate conference.

The legislation is estimated to cost \$498 billion over its five-year lifespan, or \$969 billion over 10 years, based on congressional budget scoring rules. It would spend about \$23 billion less over ten years than projected farm bill spending under current law. Most of the savings would come from crop subsidies, which would be cut by about \$13 billion, while conservation programs would be cut by roughly \$6 billion and nutrition programs would be cut by approximately \$4 billion. The next step in passing a 2012 farm bill is House passage of its version a new five-year farm bill. The House is expected to markup its bill in July, and the bill could be debated and voted on by the full House prior to Congress' adjournment for the August recess..

### ***Surface Transportation Reauthorization***

Our team closely tracked the progress of the surface transportation reauthorization bill in June. After nine temporary extensions since the expiration of the last surface transportation reauthorization bill in 2009, and with the current funding set to expire on June 30, House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid put pressure on the leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee to reconcile their policy and political differences to complete work on the surface transportation reauthorization before the end of the month. As a result, Congress defied predictions and before the June 30 deadline, passed a surface transportation bill that authorizes federal highway, transit and rail programs through September 30, 2014, at an estimated cost of \$120 billion. The 599-page bill reduces the number of highway programs by two thirds. The controversial coal ash and Keystone XL provisions House Republicans pushed for were dropped, but the streamlining provisions they wanted made it in the bill, including exempting from environmental review certain emergency infrastructure replacements and programs that receive less than \$5 million in federal funds. The cuts aren't as deep as many conservatives wanted and the concessions went too far for some Democrats.

Of particular importance to the County, transportation enhancement funding--for items such as bike paths--remains, but a compromise split the funding between localities and states, which have an opt-out. The bill reduces the deficit by \$16.3 billion over the next decade, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. The Highway Transit Fund, the key funding source for highway projects, will be exhausted some time in fiscal year 2015.

### ***Media/Legislative/Political Updates***

GT continues to send daily 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 the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, appropriations and immigration, 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.