

## **WEEKLY WASHINGTON MARCH 14TH – MARCH 18TH, 2011**

**Below is an informal overview of the Weekly Washington activities of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.**

### **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DC TRIP**

OIA, Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Director Jack Kardys and Director for Business Development, Fundraising and Advocacy Allison Diego met with Congressional offices in Washington yesterday to discuss the urgent need to back full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in order to support the Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act, that will provide grant funding to local park and recreation agencies, and specific district-related issues. Points of interest: The need to acquire additional USDA land adjacent to Chapman Field park, and to relocate the ball fields to create Biscayne Bay public access opportunities were discussed with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Congresswoman Frederica Wilson supported current funding levels for parks through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and vowed to champion the department's Fit-2-Play: Health, Wellness, and Obesity Prevention Program.

### **3% WITHHOLDING REPEAL**

The Senate discussed repealing the 3 percent withholding mandate on government contracts Thursday morning. Senator Brown of Massachusetts urged support for his amendment. The amendment would repeal the 3 % withholding requirement, and was proposed in tandem with S. 493, the SBIR/STTR Reauthorization Act of 2011; however, no vote has been taken to date. OIA, along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, will meet with staff from Senator Rubio's office to discuss the issue on March 24, 2011. Additionally, Commissioner Heyman will submit a letter in support of Senator Brown's amendment to Senators Nelson and Rubio, urging them to co-sponsor and vote for the legislation.

### **HOUSE PASSES ANOTHER STOPGAP SPENDING BILL**

The House passed a three-week stopgap Tuesday to avert a government shutdown as lawmakers seek common ground on a long-term spending plan for FY 2011. The current continuing resolution funding the government expires March 18. The new resolution would fund the government through April 8, while cutting current spending levels by roughly \$6 billion, eliminating roughly \$2.6 billion in funding for fiscal 2010 earmarks that came from the Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, Science, Financial Services, and Interior sections of appropriations law. The measure would also trim another \$3.5 billion by reducing or zeroing out funding for 25 government programs, many of which have been targeted for elimination by the Obama administration or Senate Democrats. The Census Bureau would also lose \$1.74 billion in funds that were not used in the 2010 census. The Senate cleared the bill and the President signed it into law, but noteworthy defections in the House have taken place: 54 Republicans voted against the measure, as did 104 Democrats in the House. In comparison, only six Republicans and 85 Democrats voted against the last stopgap measure.

## **NUCLEAR SAFETY**

The earthquake in Japan, which reportedly resulted in at least 10,000 deaths and critical damage to nuclear reactors, has caused safety concerns about the U.S. nuclear industry. On Thursday, President Obama asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to investigate the safety of U.S. nuclear plants, after offering condolences and continued support to the Japanese. Florida officials announced after a review that all South Florida nuclear reactors were prepared for any natural catastrophe. Turkey Point nuclear facility in South Miami-Dade has already weathered a hit from Category 5 hurricane Andrew in 1992. Florida Power and Light Spokesman Michael Waldron said Turkey Point's reactors were built more than 20 feet above sea level, higher than the peak 16-foot storm surge caused by hurricane Andrew in Palmetto Bay just up the coast of Biscayne Bay. Waldron said that FPL will continue with its plans to add two more reactors to the location at Turkey Point. Despite the opposition to nuclear power that could result, based on the Japanese crisis, Curtis Sommerhoff, Miami-Dade's Director of emergency management, said the County completed an annual emergency training drill last month, and that all scenarios allowed for timely evacuations and ample warning times for citizens.

## **SENATOR RUBIO VOWS TO PREVENT EPA WATER RULES**

Florida Senator Marco Rubio said he will continue to push for a provision that will strip the EPA of its ability to enforce water regulations in Florida. Rubio said he would attach the measure to every major bill until the debate over the water regulations is settled. A similar bill is being considered in the House. The EPA has targeted Florida regulations that do not meet the standards of the Clean Water Act, and, last week, EPA administrator Lisa Jackson pledged to work with Florida officials on the matter. Republicans and at least two Democrats, Senator Bill Nelson and President Barack Obama, have also requested an economic review of the regulations. Environmentalists responded by saying that the State's lakes, rivers and streams will continue to suffer until the changes are made.

## **ACADEMIC TRAVEL TO CUBA**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Florida asked the U.S. Supreme Court to roll back a Florida law banning the state's public universities from using private, state, or federal funds to travel to Cuba, and four other countries considered to be terrorist states. Plaintiffs, who include faculty members and students at a number of Florida institutions, argue that the law interferes with the Federal government's ability to regulate foreign commerce. The five-year-old Florida law prohibits professors, students, and scientists from conducting research and studying in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria.

## **EPA SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WEEKLY CALL**

OIA participated in a Climate Communities Conference Call on Thursday to discuss clean energy legislation. Thirty-two states have some form of clean or renewable energy standards already in place, and work is under way to create a national standard, in which all utility companies would diversify away from fossil fuel production. Although prospects are dim for energy legislation to move in the Republican-controlled House, Climate Communities said that

the White House and Senate could be movers of energy legislation. Among these potential bills was the Waxman-Markley bill that has already passed the House. It includes a national renewable energy standard of 20% by 2020. It would also create the Clean Energy Deployment Administration (CEDA), a public financing body that would speed the adoption of clean energy and efficient manufacturing technologies through large “demonstration” projects. If the Waxman-Markley bill does not pass, the CEDA could still be part of a National Infrastructure Bank, such as that proposed by the bipartisan BUILD Act. Climate Communities also said the nuclear emergency in Japan would definitely have an impact on U.S. domestic energy policy. Key Congressional Democrats have urged caution on expanding nuclear production, but Republican leadership in both the Senate and the House have re-emphasized their support. The clout of the nuclear industry in Washington could de-rail support for energy legislation in the event that they are left out of the picture, but that is just one scenario, and the impact of the disaster in Japan remains to be seen.

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA TO SPEAK AT MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE GRADUATION**

President Barack Obama will address more than 3,000 graduates from Miami-Dade College’s graduation ceremony on April 29 at the James L. Knight Center in Downtown Miami, the college office announced Wednesday. Obama is the third standing or former president to be the keynote speaker at Miami-Dade College graduation ceremonies in the last decade.

### **CALENDAR**

Congress will be on recess for a week of constituent work in their districts, for the period of March 21-28. Sessions will resume on March 29th. During the week of March 28th, the Miami-Dade Public Housing Agency (MDPHA) will be in town to meet with the county’s congressional delegation to discuss the impact of HUD budget proposals on Public Housing and Section 8 Programs in Miami-Dade County.