

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

November 21ST – November 23RD, 2011

Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:

THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

COMMISSIONER HEYMAN INVITED TO WHITE HOUSE BILL SIGNING CEREMONY

On Monday, Commissioner Sally Heyman attended a ceremony at the White House where President Obama signed into law the "3% Government Withholding Requirement and Veterans Jobs Bill," HR 674. The bill passed the Senate 95-0 on November 10th and by the House of Representatives 422-0 on November 16th.

"The success of the 3% Repeal legislation, estimated to save Miami-Dade County \$68 million annually, was a six year effort by Commissioner Sally Heyman who spearheaded the legislative effort with then Congressman Kendrick Meek," said Miriam Singer of the Internal Services Department. "Persistent advocacy resulted in successful 'delays of implementation' these past five years and strategic efforts of the Government Withholding Relief Coalition, a public/private group representing over 168 organizations including Miami-Dade County, National Association of Counties, U.S. Chamber of Commerce brought us this great result." Commissioner Heyman and Miami Dade Procurement Department worked to keep this issue a priority for Congress to pass.

"I truly appreciate the efforts of many people and organizations over the past six years," said Commissioner Heyman. "The diligence in maintaining this as a priority by Miami-Dade, the Florida and National Association of Counties, is a victory for all taxpayers and all local governments throughout the United States. I am delighted to be invited to the White House to witness such a great event along with representatives of government, business and our Veterans."

A large coalition of local governments and small businesses, of which Miami-Dade County has been part of, has long advocated for the legislation. The bill repeals a section of the federal tax code requiring State and Local governments that expend more than \$100 million per year in outside contracts to withhold three percent of all payments for goods and services, remit that to the IRS, and adhere to new reporting requirements.

This bill being signed into law marks a significant legislative accomplishment for Commissioner Sally Heyman, who has been a leading advocate, and was among the first elected officials from across the country, in support of the bill. The County strongly supported the passage of the 3% withholding measure. OIA, along with Commissioner Heyman, Director Miriam Singer and the Federal Lobbying Team worked tirelessly to help secure the bill's passage.

The bill included measures to boost veterans' unemployment by providing tax credits of up to \$9,600 to firms that hire veterans with service connected disabilities who had been unemployed for at least six months out of the past year. The measure also extends existing tax credits for hiring veterans through 2012 and would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a veterans' retraining program by July 1, 2012. All of these provisions were included in the President's jobs bill which has seen other elements stall in the Senate.

CHAIRMAN MARTINEZ SENDS LETTER TO SEC. LAHOOD, URGING SUPPORT FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FIU AND MDX TIGER III FUNDING

Last Thursday, Miami-Dade County Commission Chairman Joe Martinez sent a letter of support to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Roy LaHood, expressing his strong support for the TIGER III grant applications.

Next week, OIA, FIU's DC office and the MDX Federal Lobbying Team will visit members of the Miami-Dade County congressional delegation to advocate for support of the application.

OIA, along with MDT and Aviation, the Office of Management and Budget - Grants Coordination Division for Miami-Dade County and the *Alcalde & Fay and Greenberg Taurig Federal Lobbying Teams*, along with Florida International University (FIU) are working to advocate and secure the TIGER III grant funding. The FIU and county partnership is for the SR-836 Express Enhanced Bus Service project which would link FIU's Modesto A. Maidique Campus, the FIU Engineering Center and the MIC. This partnership is the result of several components of the project impacting the MIA Mover to MIA, Tri-Rail, Metrorail, Metrobus and Airport Flyer to many Miami-Dade County metropolitan area destinations. The Congressional delegation has also agreed to voice their support of these projects to Secretary LaHood.

FEMA REIMBURSEMENT BRINGS FEDERAL DOLLARS TO COUNTY

U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced on Friday that the State of Florida was the recipient of several grants, one of which was directed to Miami-Dade County. Miami-Dade County was awarded \$6,916,272.12 for debris monitoring resulting from the powerful winds and heavy rains Hurricane Katrina generated mixed vegetative debris including fallen trees,

limbs and brush that blocked public rights-of-way and highways throughout the county and thus creating a public safety and health issue.

MAYOR GIMENEZ VISITS ISRAEL; DIRECTOR SOMMERHOFF TO PARTICIPATE IN TRIP NEXT WEEK

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez traveled to Israel on Sunday, November 13th to participate in Project Interchange, a six-day leadership and educational seminar where he was joined by a delegation of mayors and municipal leaders from U.S. metropolitan areas including Houston, Cincinnati, Portland and St. Paul. The Mayor met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat. Additionally, Mayor Gimenez participated in meetings with Better Place Company, a global provider of electric vehicle networks and services; a panel discussion with representatives of Israeli clean-tech and renewable energy companies.

Mayor Gimenez said, "Israel and South Florida share a strong bond, and I look forward to further strengthening our cultural ties and fostering new bilateral economic development opportunities that will positively impact Miami-Dade County."

Project Interchange is an educational institute of the American Jewish Committee that brings policy makers and opinion leaders to Israel for a week of intensive, hands-on learning. Topics covered included Israel's complex political landscape, approach to municipal management and the country's forward-looking economic development efforts.

The trip was not funded by taxpayer dollars and all costs associated with the seminar are covered by the host organization or by the participants.

The Mayor's visit came in advance of Office of Emergency Management Director Curtis Sommerhoff's trip to Israel on December 3rd as part of an opportunity for participants to be exposed to first responder's experience in Israel as well as the complex threats they face. The trip will explore critical foreign policy and national security issues affecting both Israel and the United States, and discuss how the two countries are cooperating in dealing with these issues. It will also allow participants to explore the possible utility of increased cooperation between the US and Israel in the areas of homeland security, emergency response to terror and other incidents, and emergency and hospital preparedness.

The program will include discussions with Israeli government officials, military officers, and leading academics and journalists. The program on the ground in Israel will include:

- Briefings on the security situation including continuing threats to the U.S. and Israel.

- Presentations by Israeli first responders including fire/rescue, EMS, bomb disposal units and Israeli police as well as preparedness for secondary devices and response.
- Tour/presentation of EMS and trauma center response to mass casualty incidents including triage for EMS, dispatchers and hospitals as well as preparedness and response activities.
- Presentations of Israeli defense technologies such as missile defense.
- A strategic tour of key areas such as the Golan Heights and Sderot.

Like the Mayor's trip, this will also not be funded at the taxpayer's expense but by the American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF). AIEF provides funding to educate opinion leaders about the U.S.-Israel relationship and to expand public awareness about issues affecting the Middle East.

SUPER COMMITTEE FAILS – PRESIDENT THREATENS VETO OF LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT MANDATORY CUTS IN FEDERAL SPENDING

The Republican and Democratic members of Congress anointed to lead the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (i.e. "Super Committee") announced yesterday that the panel could not achieve its goal of reaching a bipartisan agreement for cutting the federal deficit by \$1.2 trillion before the statutory November 23rd deadline. Under the August law that increased the debt limit (Public Law 112-25), the Super Committee had until November 23rd to approve a plan. However, the committee had to have a bipartisan agreement in place by midnight yesterday in order to meet a 48-hour notice requirement of any proposal.

Representative Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) issued a joint statement announcing that the committee could not reach an agreement. They also stressed the urgency of addressing the nation's fiscal crisis and expressed hope that the Congress can build on the Super Committee's efforts over the past three months. Democrats blamed Republicans for the Super Committee's failure by refusing to agree to tax increases, while Republicans blamed it on the Democrats' unwillingness to make cuts to entitlement programs.

With this failure, the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25) requires \$1.2 trillion in automatic across-the-board spending cuts, a process known as "sequestration." Half of the cuts are required to come from defense, and half will come from domestic programs, including both discretionary spending and some e spending.

The first automatic cuts will take effect January 2, 2013. The second cuts will occur in February 2013 when the President submits his budget request for Fiscal Year 2014. The sequestration will change the caps on the FY2014 discretionary spending levels and impose across-the board cuts in mandatory programs. Subsequent cuts will occur each year with the submission of the President's budget request until FY2021.

Medicaid, Social Security, military pay, veterans' spending and programs aimed helping low-income individuals, such as food stamps, will be exempt from the automatic cuts. The law allows for cuts in Medicare of up to 2 percent per year. The Medicare cuts would only affect payments to providers, not to beneficiaries.

Republicans have already expressed concerns about the \$600 billion in cuts to defense spending and are expected to try to reverse some or all of the automatic budget cuts. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) are expected to offer an amendment to the pending FY2012 defense authorization bill that would stop the defense cuts when the Senate reconvenes next week. Others are concerned about the \$600 billion in cuts to domestic programs and mandatory spending.

Because the sequestration is required by the Budget Control Act, any effort to change them would require a change in the law. President Obama made clear that he would veto any attempt to do away with the sequestration. He directed Congress to come up with a plan to reduce the deficit before the automatic cuts go into effect in January 2013. Senator Majority Leader Reid said that he would also oppose any efforts to roll back the automatic cuts unless they were accompanied by a plan to reduce the deficit. *(PREPARED BY DC LOBBYING TEAM – AKERMAN SENTERFITT)*

REP. WILSON ANNOUNCES \$600,000 IN FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING FOR CITY OF OPA-LOCKA

Earlier this week, Rep. Frederica Wilson announced the award of a \$624,479 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to the City of Opa-Locka. The grant funding will go toward urban development.

In a statement, the Congresswoman said, "I'm pleased to announce this critical funding for urban renewal in Opa-Locka," said Congresswoman Wilson. "From day one, my focus has been jobs, jobs, jobs, and this federal assistance will go a long way to make our community a better place to live, work, and raise our children."

Also indicated in the release is an explanation that the federal funding will be used to support urban development projects as part of Opa-Locka Vision 20/20, an initiative to make the city more livable, competitive, and sustainable. The project is overseen by the Opa-Locka Community Development Corporation. The unemployment rate in Opa-Locka stands at over 16%, with 32% of working families falling below the poverty line.

FY2012 - APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE AND LOOKING AHEAD TO ADJOURNMENT

Last week, Congress completed action on the first FY2012 appropriations bills. An agreement was reached on a minibus that includes the Agriculture, Commerce-Justice-Science, Transportation-HUD appropriations bills. The House and Senate passed the minibus on November 17, and it was signed into law by the President. The minibus also

includes a Continuing Resolution that will keep the rest of the government operating until December 16.

Before the Thanksgiving recess, the Senate was working on another minibuss that included the Energy and Water Development, Financial Services and State-Foreign Operations bills. However, objections by Senate Republicans forced the bills to be considered separately. Senate Majority Leader Reid then tried to continue working on just the Energy and Water appropriations bill, but was forced to set it aside when it became clear that they would not be able to get an agreement to limit amendments and finish the bill before the Thanksgiving recess.

With only three of the 12 FY2012 appropriations bills completed, Congress is now expected to roll the remaining 9 bills into one omnibus appropriations bill. They will try to complete it before the current Continuing Resolution expires on December 16.

In addition to the appropriations bills, Congress has a number of issues they must deal with before they adjourn for the year. Some of the issues were expected to be dealt with by the Super Committee, but with their inability to reach an agreement; those issues will now need to be dealt with separately. This includes legislation to prevent scheduled cuts in Medicare payments to doctors, and to extend expiring tax cuts, alternative minimum tax relief and federal unemployment benefits.

Balanced Budget Amendment

The Budget Control Act signed into law in August, which increased the debt ceiling limit and created the Super Committee, also required both the House and Senate to vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA) to the Constitution by the end of the year. However, there is no penalty in the law if Congress fails to approve a BBA.

On November 18, the House rejected a Balanced Budget Amendment (H.J. Res. 2) by a vote of 261-165. The measure failed to get the two-thirds majority required to amend the Constitution.

Twenty-five Democrats voted for the amendment, while 4 Republicans voted against it, including House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) who was concerned that that BBA approved by the House would not solve the nation's fiscal problems. He and other conservative Republicans support a more restrictive BBA (H.J. Res. 1).

The last time the House voted on a BBA was in 1995. At the time, it passed by a vote of 300-132.

The Senate has yet to schedule its vote. The BBA is also expected to fail in the Senate.

(PREPARED BY DC LOBBYING TEAM – AKERMAN SENTERFITT)

GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD 2012

Michele Bachmann – U.S. Rep. from Minnesota
Herman Cain – former CEO of Godfather's Pizza
Newt Gingrich – former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
Jon Huntsman – former Gov. of Utah & former Ambassador to China
Gary Johnson – former Gov. of New Hampshire
Ron Paul – U.S. Rep. from Texas
Rick Perry – Gov. of Texas
Buddy Roemer – former Gov. of Louisiana*
Mitt Romney – former Gov. of Massachusetts
Rick Santorum – former Sen. from Pennsylvania

*(*will not be on FL primary ballot)*

FEDERAL LOBBYIST REPORTS

Please use the following link to access the monthly lobbyist reports for the Washington D.C. lobbying team http://www.miamidade.gov/intergov/federal_lobbyist.asp

NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: NOVEMBER 28TH – DECEMBER 2ND

*THE HOUSE AND SENATE ARE CURRENTLY IN RECESS FOR THE
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.*

BOTH CHAMBERS WILL RECONVENE NEXT WEEK.