

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

December 12TH – December 16TH, 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 DIAZ TRAVELS TO WASHINGTON

Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz traveled to Washington D.C. this past week to attend a meeting for the United States Trade Representative (USTR) – Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Committee on Trade, of which Commissioner Diaz is one of several appointed members who make recommendations to the USTR and Obama Administration from the perspective of local governments.

Commissioner Diaz also held a series of official meetings over the course of two days, with Sens. Bill Nelson, Marco Rubio; Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and David Rivera; Panama’s Ambassador, His Excellency Mario E. Jaramillo; Deputy Assistant Sec. of Defense for Military Community & Family Policy Robert L. Gordon, III; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere Dr. Frank O. Mora; the White House Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, David Agnew and staff working on First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Joining Forces” military families initiative.*

*“Joining Forces” is a comprehensive national initiative being led by the First Lady, to mobilize all sectors of society to give our service members and their families the opportunities and support they have earned. The program focuses on three areas to achieve this goal – Education, Employment and Wellness:

Employment. In many cases, military spouses move from one community to another when their spouses are assigned to new duty stations. These transfers can make it very difficult for spouses to continue with their careers or to find similar jobs in new locations.

Education. Military children move frequently due to a parent’s reassignment. These moves can make it difficult to transfer records, secure spaces in courses, stay included in extra-curricular activities, and complete required testing on time.

Wellness. The stress of war, multiple deployments, and frequent moves can affect the wellness of military families. Children and spouses can experience anxiety, changes in relationships with family and friends, isolation or emotional challenges in dealing with deployments, illness or injury, and high mobility.

In his meetings, Commissioner Diaz advocated on behalf of the County's efforts to host the Miami International Aerospace Show (MIAS) and made a strong argument to the White House regarding MIAS serving the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden's "Joining Forces" initiative ([Comm. Diaz letter to the White House is attached](#)). Commissioner Diaz also sought to continue the County's productive working relationship with the nation of Panama and to ensure swift and seamless implementation of the recently approved Free Trade Agreements for Panama and Colombia in his meetings with USTR officials and Panama's Ambassador.

Commissioner Diaz also discussed his County Resolution which advocates for the strengthening of laws against human and sex trafficking, which was passed by the County Commission last September.

Finally, Commissioner Diaz pushed members of the congressional delegation to continue to work with the Department of Homeland Security Sec. Janet Napolitano, to identify ways to ensure an adequate disbursement of first responder and emergency management funds to local governments, in addition to making the Ft. Lauderdale/Miami UASI a Tier 1 UASI entity.

PORT OF MIAMI RECEIVES \$1.6 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FROM FEMA

On Thursday, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is announced a Federal grant for Miami-Dade County in the amount of \$1,671,261.38. The grant is for a reconciliation of actual costs to repair the Port of Miami's Terminal B, Terminal C, and Boarding Hall roofs. The Port of Miami performed roof repairs including removing and replacing a damaged roof, replacing a metal roof hatch, repairing the fire alarm system, replacing fire alarm pull stations, replacing damaged strobe/horn devices, replacing metal covers on 2 AC units, and replacing condenser coils on another AC unit. The Federal grant ultimately obligated a total of \$2,957,545.86 of which \$1,286,284.48 was previously obligated.

MIAS PROPOSAL SHOT DOWN BY SEC. DONLEY: AIR FORCE DENIES MIAMI-DADE COUNTY REQUEST TO UTILIZE PORTION OF HOMESTEAD AIR RESERVE BASE (HARB) FOR JOB CREATING AIR AND TRADE SHOW

Following an extensive analysis by U.S. Air Force Sec. Donley and his staff, Miami-Dade County and the Beacon Council learned yesterday that the Air Force will not allow the use of a runway at HARB for the planned Miami International Aerospace Show (MIAS). The response came after months of consideration by the Secretary and his staff, who provided the same rationale for denial that was initially provided to the County over the summer – if the Air Force approved the MIAS proposal, it would set a precedent for the rest of the country.

Rep. Ilona Ros-Lehtinen, who has been a very strong and vocal advocate for MIAS, issued the following statement after learning of the Air Force's decision:

"I held a comprehensive phone call with Secretary Donley earlier today where he informed me that the Air Force would not support our plans to host the air show at HARB. To say that I was very disappointed would be an understatement. We have been trying for many months to get the Miami International Aerospace Show hosted at HARB and even though my colleagues and I gave it our best shot, the Air Force does not support our project."

On Friday afternoon, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen and the Miami-Dade County Congressional Delegation sent a letter (attached) to Sec. Of Defense Leon Panetta, urging the Secretary to reconsider the Air Force's denial of the County's request.

MIAS has the strong bipartisan support of the entire Florida Congressional delegation and Gov. Rick Scott. OIA will continue to work with the Beacon Council and the Florida Congressional delegation to identify possible solutions to the precedent issue raised by the Air Force.

FLORIDA RECEIVES ONLY TWO TIGER III GRANT AWARDS – COUNTY AND FIU APPLICATIONS COME UP SHORT

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced on Thursday that 46 transportation projects in 33 states and Puerto Rico will receive a total of \$511 million from the third round of the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) popular TIGER program. Unfortunately, Miami-Dade County was not awarded a grant. The county submitted two projects; the *SR-836 Express Enhanced Bus Service*, including a grant request of \$18.3M; and the *Perimeter Road Widening and Realignment Project*, which includes a grant request of \$19.2M.

Additionally, 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 Traurig Federal Lobbying Teams*, along with Florida International University (FIU) worked together to secure the TIGER III grant funding. The FIU and county partnership was 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 was 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 also submitted letters of support to Secretary LaHood on behalf of the county and these projects.

DOT received 848 project applications from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, DC, requesting a total of \$14.29 billion, far exceeding the \$511 million made available for grants under the TIGER III program. There is expected to be an announcement for TIGER IV grants sometime in 2012. Miami-Dade County will again submit projects, and OIA and the Federal Lobbying Team will advocate for their support.

CONGRESS PASSES “MEGABUS” SPENDING BILL – AVOIDS MIDNIGHT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The U.S. House of Representatives cleared the FY2012 federal spending package on Friday afternoon, again working against the clock to avoid a midnight deadline to replenish the coffers for the federal government.

Appropriators completed work on a nine-bill “megabus” that provides nearly \$1 trillion to fund government activities through September 30, 2012. The bipartisan legislation is expected to pass the Senate on Saturday. OIA is currently working with the federal lobbying team to inform county departments how this could impact their anticipated use of federal grant dollars for services.

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN PROMISES CONTINUED ACTION ON IRANIAN THREAT IN LATIN AMERICA

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, made the following statement on Iran’s growing influence and activity in the Western Hemisphere:

“The United States must always aggressively protect and defend our security interests, and that goes double when the threat is close to our borders. It is no secret that Iran is actively working with its anti-American cohorts in Latin America to threaten U.S. interests. Iran’s activities in our region pose a serious threat to our security and must be faced head-on.

“The House Committee on Foreign Affairs has been investigating and will continue to investigate Iran’s influence in the Western Hemisphere. The Committee has held classified briefings on these issues, and most recently held an open hearing examining the region’s security challenges, including ties between Iran, Hezbollah, and Venezuela. I have introduced legislation addressing these critical security matters and have also requested the Department of State to launch investigations into Iran’s deeply troubling partnerships with regional dictators such as Chavez, Morales, Correa, Ortega and the Castro brothers.

“A recent Univision documentary also illustrated the presence of Hezbollah in Latin America. And today we learned about a recent case involving a Lebanese national, Ayman Joumaa, who allegedly has ties to Hezbollah and made a profit by selling narcotics to the Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel.

“If we ignore this threat, it will only grow more severe. I will continue to urge the Administration to take a more active role in addressing the increasing security threat posed by Iran in the Western Hemisphere. In addition, the House Foreign Affairs Committee will keep monitoring the situation. I am planning to hold another hearing examining Iran’s growing influence in our region early in the next Congress.”

NOTE: Last week, the Spanish-language television network Univision aired a documentary, “La Amenaza Iraní” (The Iranian Threat), which detailed Iran’s rising presence in Latin America. *(Courtesy of Press Release from House Committee on Foreign Affairs)*

CONGRESSMAN RIVERA, COLLEAGUES CALL FOR INVESTIGATION, POSSIBLE DEPARTURE OF VENEZUELAN CONSULATE GENERAL FOR CYBER ATTACK COORDINATION

Miami-Dade County Rep. David Rivera and three of his House colleagues expressed concern and joined in a call for action from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton regarding the Consulate General of Venezuela in Miami, Livia Antonieta Acosta Noguera.

“It has recently come to our attention that Ms. Antonieta, assigned to the Venezuelan consul in Miami since March 2011, has been linked to a potential cyber attack on the United States involving affiliates of the Iranian, Cuban, and Venezuelan regimes,” Rep. Rivera, Ros-Lehtinen, Diaz-Balart and Albio Sires (NJ) wrote in their letter to Sec. Clinton.

Antonieta was featured in the Univision Network documentary, “The Iranian Threat” (“La Amenaza Iraní”). According to the documentary, when she served as the vice secretary at the Venezuelan embassy in Mexico in 2008, she interacted with members from the Iranian and Cuban embassies and extremist students from the Universidad Autónoma of Mexico to coordinate a cyber attack against the U.S. government, and critical infrastructure systems at the White House, FBI and CIA.

“If true, these actions demonstrate Livia Antonieta’s willingness to undermine U.S. interests and the potential threat to our national security posed by Livia Antonieta’s activities. With this in mind, we respectfully request the Department of State to investigate these allegations, and if found true, declare her a persona non grata and require her immediate departure from the United States,” the letter states.

ROS-LEHTINEN BILLS TO STRENGTHEN, EXPAND SANCTIONS ON IRAN DEBATED IN HOUSE

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, on Tuesday spoke in favor of two bills which she authored to expand and strengthen U.S. sanctions on the Iranian regime. The Iran Threat Reduction Act (H.R. 1905) and the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Modernization and Reform Act (H.R. 2105) were debated by the House of Representatives earlier today, and are expected to pass the House later this week.

The following are excerpts from Ros-Lehtinen’s remarks on H.R. 1905:

“Our fundamental strategic objective must be to stop Iran before it obtains nuclear weapons capabilities, and to compel it to permanently dismantle its pursuit of such

weapons. That is the test we face, and if we fail, it will come as no consolation to the families of the victims of past and future Iranian attacks, or to our allies. We don't know how much time we have left."

The following are excerpts from Ros-Lehtinen's remarks on H.R. 2105, the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Reform and Modernization Act of 2011:

H.R. 2105 seeks to cut-off the supply networks to Iran, Syria, and North Korea. It updates and strengthens measures to prevent the proliferation of goods, services, or technology regarding nuclear, biological, chemical, and other advanced weapons, such as ballistic missiles. It expands sanctions on individuals, businesses, and countries engaged in assisting proliferation, embracing financial transactions, property, and visas, among many other penalties. It also imposes restrictions on nuclear cooperation with countries that are assisting the nuclear programs of Iran, North Korea, or Syria-- because no country that is helping an enemy of the U.S. should receive any help from us." (Courtesy of Press Release from House Committee on Foreign Affairs)

REP. DIAZ-BALART, EU PARLIAMENT MEMBER, DENOUNCE NICARAGUA'S NOVEMBER 6 ELECTIONS

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (FL) and a Member of the European Parliament, Antonio López-Istúriz (Spain), issued a joint statement last Monday, denouncing Nicaragua's November 6 elections and called on both the U.S. and E.U. to take immediate action. In a joint statement issued by the policymakers:

"The November 6 presidential and congressional elections showed a blatant disregard for democratic principles" said López-Istúriz. "Beginning with the unconstitutional candidacy of Daniel Ortega and ending with the prevention of independent observers, the electoral process was partial, exclusionary and fraudulent. The lack of transparency leaves the election results unverifiable. The international community should not let the results stand without accountability."

"From both sides of the Atlantic, we call on the international community to stand united in denouncing the actions of leaders who manipulate democratic institutions for personal gain. The international community should be equally forceful in encouraging the Nicaraguan Government to adhere to its laws, comply fully with Nicaragua's commitment to the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and respect the right of the Nicaraguan people to participate in a fair, transparent and accountable electoral process." "The EPP Secretary General and I will be seeking support from our respective legislatures to condemn and highlight the trampling of democracy, and calling on our colleagues and governments to leverage American and European influence to stand up for the Nicaraguan people," said Diaz-Balart. "They deserve no less."

SOUTH FLORIDA ADVOCATE LAUREN BOOK VISITS D.C. TO PUSH FOR STRONGER CHILD SEX ABUSE LAWS

Advocate Lauren Book, daughter of Miami-Dade County lobbyist Ron Book, traveled to Washington, D.C. on Tuesday to fight for better child protection laws. Ms. Book attended a Senate Children and Families Subcommittee hearing that was held to examine whether the current federal laws are adequately protecting children from sexual abuse. Book was sexually abused as a child for six years by a family nanny. Following the hearing, Ms. Book and the Florida delegation spoke with media covering the hearing. OIA attended the hearing with Miami-Dade County Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Rep. David Rivera, Sen. Nelson and Sen. Rubio.

Ms. Book submitted written testimony at the hearing, urging implementation of legislation that would allow federal prosecution of childhood sexual abuse and extend the federal statute of limitations for filing a civil action in such cases. Among Ms. Book's recommendations:

- Allowing criminal prosecution of childhood sexual abuse at the federal level;
- Using federal funding to universities as a way to encourage child abuse reporting and penalize those who don't report;
- Collecting childhood sex abuse statistics under the Clery Act;
- Giving victims more time to bring civil action in cases of child sex abuse by extending the federal statute of limitations.

REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ HOLDS SOUTH FLORIDA TOWN HALL

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz held a telephone town hall meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 14 from 7 – 8 p.m. with more than 8,500 constituents. A variety of issues were covered, from health care and seniors, Medicare, education in Florida, veterans issues, Iran sanctions, mortgages and curbing foreclosures, and the importance of representatives in Washington coming together to do what's best for the country.

D-BLOCK AND SPECTRUM LEGISLATION – UPDATE

Last Friday, House Republican leaders unveiled an end of the year package – H.R. 3630, the "Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011" which was passed by the House on Tuesday by a vote of 234 to 193. The bill contains provisions to extend the current payroll tax rate for one year, continue unemployment insurance benefits, and prevent a scheduled cut in Medicare physician reimbursements, known as 'the doc fix'. The bill also includes a section on spectrum (Title IV of the bill).

The spectrum provisions are similar to the bill marked up by the House Communications and Technology subcommittee on December 1. It would reallocate a section of vacant spectrum, known as the D-block, to public safety. In exchange, it also requires public safety to give up some of the spectrum they currently hold. Democrats on the subcommittee opposed this provision at the mark up. The spectrum auction authorized in the House proposal is estimated to generate \$16.5 billion in revenue. There are objections to the bill by Senate Democrats and the White House. Senate Majority

Leader Reid tried to bring the bill up on the floor on Wednesday morning but it was objected to. *(Courtesy of DC Federal Lobbying Team, Akerman Senterfitt)*

REP. WILSON INTRODUCED MANDATORY FORECLOSURE MEDIATION ACT

Rep. Frederica Wilson, this week, introduced H.R. 3595, the Mandatory Foreclosure Mediation Act. The bill would establish a mandatory mediation process for servicers of residential mortgages and borrowers and would mandate the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create regulations that would outline the mediation process as well as a system for determining whether homeowners qualify for loan modifications or foreclosure alternatives. In the event a loan servicer violates the legislative requirements, foreclosure on the home would be barred from occurring. Rep. Wilson stated, *"Florida families have been ravaged by the foreclosure epidemic across our state, and it is time to take action against predatory lenders who have taken advantage of innocent homeowners."*

REP. RIVERA ADDRESSES ENDANGERED & INVASIVE SPECIES IN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES

During a House Committee on Natural Resources Oversight Hearing on "The Endangered Species Act: How Litigation is Costing Jobs and Impeding True Recovery Efforts," Rep. David Rivera expressed his concern about endangered and invasive species in the Florida Everglades. Rep. Rivera stated, *"I support the goals of the Endangered Species Act, and we must preserve wildlife for future generations of Americans to enjoy. However there are areas in the Act that need to be enhanced and improved upon,"* said Congressman Rivera, whose South Florida district includes Everglades National Park and the Big Cypress National Preserve, both of which are home to many endangered species.

Additionally, the Congressman discussed the Burmese Python as well as a letter he sent, along with House colleagues, to the Obama Administration, requesting the finalized listing of nine species of large constrictor snakes as prohibited *"injurious species."* *"Besides the threat these snakes pose to native, endangered and threatened species, there have been numerous preventable human deaths and injuries caused by these large serpents while in captivity. There are dangerous predators; not domesticated pets,"* Congressman Rivera said.

The Congressman was also concerned and discussed two endangered species, the Everglades Snail Kite and Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and their plight.

HOUSE PASSES TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

On Thursday, the House passed a bill (H.R. 3659) to extend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) through Fiscal Year 2012. The TANF program makes block

grants to states to provide cash assistance, job training and other services to low-income families that have children. The bill funds TANF at the current level – approximately \$16.5 billion per year. TANF, which is considered a "mandatory" program, is not just subject to the regular appropriations process. Congress passed the current extension of TANF in September. That bill (H.R. 2943) extends the program through December 31, 2011 so Congress will need complete its work on this extension before it adjourns for the year. *(Courtesy of DC Federal Lobbying Team, Akerman Senterfitt)*

CONGRESS TO PASS “MEGABUS” SPENDING BILL – AVOID MIDNIGHT DEADLINE FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

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CLIMATE COMMUNITIES

“Using Competition to Encourage Energy Efficiency Improvements: Kansas’ Take Charge Challenge” was the title of this week’s Climate Communities webinar. The webinar sought to answer the question of how to raise community awareness about energy efficiency. Climate Communities said, “As local government officials know, getting through to citizens is no easy task, and changing human behavior is even more difficult. In Kansas, a state with strong sports rivalries at the collegiate and high school levels, competition was the answer.”

Dorothy Barnett, Executive Director of the Climate + Energy Project, a non-profit association that organized the Take Charge Challenge, as well as Eileen Horn, the City of Lawrence/Douglas County Sustainability Coordinator, and Ben Champion, Director of Sustainability for Kansas State University all took part in the webinar.

Kansas instituted the “Take Charge Challenge” competition, which took place over a 9-month period in which residents across 16 communities competed against each other to save energy and money. Over 1,000 events and programs involving over 400,000 Kansans were held. Savings from the competition resulted in, 110.2 billion BTUS of gas and electricity with an annual value of \$2,341,025; 22 million kilowatt hours of electricity; 19,002 barrels of oil from being imported; and 22 million pounds of CO2 emissions from being released. Winners of the competition were awarded \$100,000 in energy efficiency or renewable energy grants.

GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD 2012

Michele Bachmann – U.S. Rep. from Minnesota
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)*

Herman Cain, former CEO of Godfather's Pizza suspended his campaign

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: DECEMBER 19TH – DECEMBER 23RD

The House and Senate will not be in session next week.