

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 5TH – MARCH 9TH, 2012**

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

*THE SENATE WAS NOT IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS NOT IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **NACo CONFERENCE**

The National Association of Counties (NACo) held their annual Federal Legislative Conference in Washington during the past week from March Saturday, March 3 – Wednesday, March 7.

For the conference, OIA joined Vice-Chairwoman Audrey Edmonson, Commissioner Sally Heyman and Commissioner Lynda Bell, and their staff, in attending steering committee meetings, policy education workshops and Hill visits. The annual gathering brought together over 2,000 elected and appointed county officials from across the country to focus on legislative issues facing county and regional governments.

Conference attendees heard from key Administration officials, advocacy groups and members of Congress throughout the five day conference. The conference also held policy steering committee meetings, where committee members debated and voted on a myriad of issues that impact County government. The issues, considered in the form of resolutions, are then sent to the full NACo board for consideration and, if adopted, help set the platform for the organization's collective advocacy efforts to Congress and the Administration throughout the year (e.g. the 3% withholding tax, which was repealed by Congress and the White House recently, was a major policy platform advocated by NACo and its county membership for years).

### **VICE-CHAIRWOMAN EDMONSON MEETS WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

During the NACo Legislative Conference, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners Vice-Chairwoman Audrey Edmonson met with members of the county's Congressional delegation. The Vice-Chairwoman met with Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Wasserman Schultz, Mario-Diaz Balart, Frederica Wilson and David Rivera. Among the issues she broached with the Members were the Miami International Aerospace Show, beach renourishment, the pending visa-waiver bill and UASI funding. The Chairwoman discussed the 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda and also thanked the delegation for their steadfast support of the county's deep dredge project at PortMiami.

## **CONGRESSWOMAN WILSON ANNOUNCES \$900,319 IN RESEARCH FUNDING FOR UM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

This week Rep. Frederica Wilson announced two grants totaling \$900,319 for the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine. The National Eye Institute awarded UM \$527,359 for the study of signaling scaffolds and survival in stroke, and \$372,960 for the study of trabecular meshwork proteins in glaucoma. The National Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

*"I'm pleased to announce this critical funding for the UM School of Medicine," said Rep. Wilson. "As a member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, I believe supporting research and development in the sciences is vital for our nation's future. I look forward to UM and other South Florida institutions continuing to receive these important grants."*

## **SEN. RUBIO SENDS LETTER RE COUNTY FTZ APPLICATION**

Earlier this week, Sen. Marco Rubio sent a letter on behalf of Miami-Dade County's application to establish and administer a General Purpose Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ). The Miami Dade-Dade General Purpose FTZ would complement the significant logistical and infrastructure improvements already taking place in the County as importers and manufacturers prepare for the cargo volume increase resulting from the Panama Canal expansion. Existing efforts include the tunnel construction and dredging at PortMiami; the expansion of MIA's cargo facilities; and the TIGER grant funded restoration of rail freight service between the port and the national railway system. Sen. Bill Nelson has also sent a letter of support on behalf of the County's application, which is currently pending before the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Foreign-Trade Zones Board.

## **CONGRESSMAN RIVERA ANNOUNCES STUDYING TOWARDS ADJUSTED RESIDENCY STATUS (STARS) ACT**

Rep. David Rivera announced today that he will file the Studying Towards Adjusted Residency Status (STARS) Act. The bill will allow undocumented immigrants who are 18 years and 6 months of age or younger, arrived in the United States before the age of 16, and have maintained residence in the United States for at least the previous five consecutive years, the opportunity to adjust their residency status if they achieve a degree from an accredited four year institution of higher education and meet certain other criteria.

Congressman Rivera was inspired to develop the STARS Act by Daniela Pelaez, an 18 year old constituent who is the valedictorian of her high school class while also facing deportation proceedings. Daniela was brought to the United States by her parents at age four without documentation.

According to Rep. Rivera's office, the STARS Act authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to suspend the removal of an undocumented immigrant and grant them conditional non-immigrant status (upon application) if the individual petitions for such suspension and meets the following requirements:

- Obtained a high school diploma or equivalent
- Arrived in the U.S. before the age of 16
- Maintained residence in the U.S. for at least the previous five consecutive years
- Has demonstrated "good moral conduct" as defined by U.S. Code Title 8 Section 1227(a)
- Has been accepted to an accredited 4 year institution of higher education.
- Is 18 years, 6 months of age or younger.

The conditional non-immigrant status will be granted for five years. However, it will be immediately revoked if the individual:

- Fails to continue demonstrating "good moral conduct"
- Becomes a public charge.
- Fails to begin matriculation into an accredited 4 year institution of higher education within 1 year of receiving the conditional non-immigrant status.
- Fails to continue to attend a college or university.

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall extend non-immigrant status for an additional five years if the individual:

- Has graduated from an accredited 4 year institution of higher education
- Continues to demonstrate "good moral conduct"
- Has maintained residence in the U.S. throughout their studies.
- Becomes a public charge.

After receiving the additional five year non-immigrant status extension, the STARS Act authorizes the graduate to apply for legal permanent status.

*"Daniela Pelaez is a star student. Her dedication to her school work has taken her to the top of her class at North Miami Senior High School. She has already been accepted to the University of Florida and is awaiting acceptance letters from schools like Yale. However, while Daniela should be preparing for graduation and her future academic pursuits, she is instead concerned about possibly being deported," Congressman Rivera said.*

*"The Studying Towards Adjusted Residency Status, or STARS Act, would give these students who seek to further their education an opportunity to get a degree at an American university and earn legal status.*

*"However, the STARS Act does not ensure automatic suspension of removal or automatic residency. This legislation very specifically focuses on students who*

*have been accepted to four year colleges and universities and have not yet accrued penalty time. STARS Act applicants must show good moral character and graduate with a degree from an accredited four year institution of higher learning to then be eligible for legal status. Likewise, if the applicant fails to meet the necessary criteria, their conditional non-immigrant status will be revoked.*

*“This bill provides an opportunity for young people, like Daniela, who have established long-standing ties in the United States, and who have excelled academically, an opportunity to fulfill their goals of getting an education and achieving the American dream.”*

## **OIA ATTENDS ANNUAL AIPAC POLICY CONFERENCE**

On Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup> through Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup> OIA participated in the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) annual Policy Conference in Washington, DC. During the course of the Conference, President Barack Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich, among many other Administration officials and Congressional Members addressed the over 13,000 attendees.

During the conference OIA attended a breakout session titled, “Civic Cooperation: U.S. Cities Bank on Israeli Ingenuity.” The discussion featured The Honorable Donald Plusquellic, Mayor, Akron, Ohio, Mr. Jonathan Medved, Co-Founder and CEO, Vringo and David Goodtree of Goodtree Gordon Charitable Foundation.

The session focused on cooperation at the local level between U.S. cities and Israel. U.S. cities have benefited greatly from business partnerships with Israeli firms, focusing on energy research, environmental concerns and the high-tech industry. Cooperation at the municipal level has become a driving force behind the U.S.-Israel alliance.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts had almost 100 companies with ties to Israel that resulted in \$2.4 Billion in direct revenue to the Commonwealth, \$7.8 Billion in total revenue in Massachusetts including the companies that service them, 6000 Mass high level knowledge jobs direct, 21,000 Mass jobs including companies that service them and MA-Israel relationship= 2.1% of MA GDP.

Aside from Massachusetts and a water incubator in Los Angeles and antiterrorism deal with LAX, small cities like Akron, OH, Fresno, CA, Bennington, VT, Walker, MI, Wixom, MI, Anderson, IN have struck deals with Israeli companies to bring hundreds of jobs to the community.

The session and subsequent contacts could be mutually beneficial to Miami-Dade County and Israeli companies as it is a natural fit based on being a gateway to the Americas for U.S. companies, the need for local job growth, a large Israeli population in

South Florida, research facilities at universities like FIU, UM and MDC, presence of Israeli companies already in the county and around the state, the Mayor's recent trip and the Governor's trade mission to Israel and access to PortMiami and Miami International Airport.

## **CONGRESS STRUGGLES WITH PARTISAN DIVISIONS OVER TRANSPORTATION BILLS**

Staring down a March 31 deadline to reauthorize federal transportation programs, congressional leadership has spent the better part of the last few weeks attempting to come up with a bill that would satisfy the diverse views of members in both the House and Senate. The following is a breakdown how things have gone over the course of these deliberations which was prepared by *Federal Lobbying Team Akerman Senterfit*.

### **Background**

A few weeks ago, the Senate was starting to consider the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill on the chamber floor. At the same time, the level of opposition to the House version had grown to such a level that the House leadership deferred action on the bill while they tried to find a version that could pass the House. Not much has changed in the House during the past few weeks. In the Senate, an agreement has been reached on the way to proceed. In the near future, likely the middle of next week, the Senate will pass its version of the bill.

### **House Bill Status - Analysis**

- In the House, leadership has still not found a version of the bill that can pass. Originally, the House Committees of jurisdiction produced a bill that ran five years and cost \$260 billion. To partially pay for the bill, the House also added provisions that would allow oil and gas drilling in Alaska and off the California and Atlantic coasts. The bill also included other controversial provisions like one to eliminate guaranteed gas tax funding for transit programs. The inclusion of the oil and gas provisions guaranteed that every Democrat would vote against it. The overall cost of the bill caused many conservative Republicans to oppose it. The transit funding provisions were opposed by Republicans that have transit properties in their districts. It became clear eventually that the bill would not pass.
- Leadership then proposed a version of the bill that would only run 18 months (a shorter bill would cost less money). It also restored the transit funding provision. But it continued to include the oil and gas drilling sections. This second version also did not fly. The Democrats continued to oppose the oil and gas provisions, while many Republicans wanted the bill to run for five years. (It is easier to plan big transit and road projects with multi-year funding.)
- At this point the Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman John Mica (FL), got crossways with the House leadership. He

continued to favor his long term bill and expressed his concerns publically in a way that the leadership took as criticism. The Speaker removed him from managing the bill, although a day later it appears that Chairman Mica is back. It is safe to say, however, that going forward he will follow the wishes of the Speaker.

- The Republican caucus met this past week to discuss their options. The options included passing the five year bill with modifications, passing the Senate version of the bill after the Senate is done, or passing a long term extension of the existing law which expires on March 31. There was no consensus and the caucus adjourned without reaching any conclusions.
- Over the next few weeks the House leadership and Chairman Mica will try to find a version of the bill that can pass. It is impossible to predict what will be added or deleted right now.
- Frankly, it is hard to see how the House will resolve the issues involved. Many Members insist that they want a long term bill. Others want the bill to spend less money. But others want to maintain existing funding levels since the need for transportation dollars is so high. The best guess right now is that the House will fail to pass its own version of the bill and instead will wait to work on the Senate-passed version.

### **Senate Bill Status - Analysis**

- In the Senate, things have gone more smoothly. Senators have written a bill that has wide bipartisan support. It runs 18 months and avoids almost every controversial issue. It funds the highway and transit programs at current levels.
- Earlier this week, Senate Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell worked out a deal on the number of amendments that would be considered. Both sides agreed to limit consideration to 30 amendments. Some of them amend parts of the bill. Others are on non-germane topics, such as on the Keystone Pipeline project. After the list of amendments are voted on or disposed of, the Senate will vote on final passage of the bill.

### **Existing Law – Clock Is Ticking**

The existing law expires on March 31st. The House is scheduled to be out of session next week. Clearly, the Congress will not succeed in getting a new bill done in time. Congress will pass another extension of the existing law. How long the extension will last is unknown, although some lawmakers are calling for 45 days.

**REP. DIAZ-BALART COMMENDS FLORIDA LEGISLATURE FOR DENYING HARD CURRENCY TO CUBA, SYRIA**

Rep. Diaz-Balart released the following statement commending the Florida Legislature for passing SB 1144, State and Local Government Relations with Cuba or Syria bill:

*"I commend the Florida Legislature for passing the 'State and Local Government Relations with Cuba or Syria' bill HB959 (SB 1144)," said Rep. Diaz-Balart. This bill prevents Florida's agencies and local governments from contracting for \$1 million or more with companies that do business with Cuba and Syria, two U.S.-designated State Sponsors of Terrorism."*

HB959 would require the termination of state and local government contracts with businesses that partner with Cuba or Syria. *"This legislation is an important measure to prevent state funds from propping up the dictators of terrorist states who ruthlessly oppress their own people..."*

## **BEACH RENOURISHMENT MEETING**

The U.S. Army Corps is coordinating a meeting to take place within the next few weeks with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and other stakeholders to observe the work being done for the beach renourishment project located from 63rd to 69th Street in Miami Beach. Miami-Dade County Beach Program Manager Brian Flynn, along with OIA is coordinating with officials from Miami-Dade County, Miami Beach, Key Biscayne and other stakeholder groups to view the site for the renourishment project.

When a date and time have been set by the Army Corps and the Congresswoman's office OIA will inform all interested parties.

## **CLIMATE COMMUNITIES**

"Financing Options to Address the Impacts of Climate Change on Public Water Systems" was the subject of this week's Climate Communities webinar. Sharlene Leurig from Ceres and Jeffrey Odefey from American Rivers, discussed financing options and their implications for providing built-in resiliency to meet the challenges posed by a changing climate.

According to Climate Communities, "The nation's aging water infrastructure faces serious challenges from the impacts of climate change. However, current financing options to rebuild and manage public water systems won't overcome these obstacles. Today, drinking water, stormwater and wastewater systems operate as entirely distinct units rather than as interconnected systems. Existing funding tools mirror these divisions, often precluding financing options that allow systems integration. A failure to align rates with costs has also resulted in decades of undervalued water services, and underfunded infrastructure."

Highlighted in the webinar was a report by American Rivers, Ceres and The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread that recommends new approaches for financing and operating public water systems, which include:

- Local water solutions that can improve efficiencies, including green infrastructure, closed-loop systems and water recycling;
- Flexible water pricing and revenue structures that distinguish between drinking water and various other types of water, such as lawn water and toilet water;
- System-wide, full-cost accounting of water services and financing mechanisms; and
- Reduced reliance on state and federal funding and more reliance on private, market-based financing mechanisms that can support local, customer-supported solutions.

### **THE 2012 GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD – “SUPER TUESDAY”**

Super Tuesday came and went with Mitt Romney winning Alaska, Idaho, Massachusetts, Ohio, Vermont and Virginia; Rick Santorum snagging victories North Dakota, Oklahoma and Tennessee; and Newt Gingrich winning his home state of Georgia. On March 13<sup>th</sup> voters will decide the outcome of Alabama, Hawaii and Mississippi.

#### *CANDIDATES REMAINING*

Newt Gingrich – former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from Georgia

Ron Paul – U.S. Rep. from Texas

Mitt Romney – former Gov. of Massachusetts

Rick Santorum – former Sen. from Pennsylvania

### **NEXT WEEK’S CALENDAR: MARCH 12TH – MARCH 16TH**

*The House will not be in session next week.*

*The Senate will not be in session next week.*



## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 12TH – MARCH 16TH, 2012**

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### **CHAIRMAN MARTINEZ JOINS COUNTY CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN SENDING LETTER OF SUPPORT TO SEC. LAHOOD**

Yesterday, three letters of support from the Miami-Dade County congressional delegation and Board of County Commissioners Chairman Joe Martinez were sent to U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Ray LaHood on behalf of Miami-Dade Transit's efforts to obtain federal grant funding.

The County has submitted an application to UDOT for TIGER IV grant funding to be directed toward two projects – Northwest 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue Enhanced Bus Service, which seeks to provide bus service along the corridor extending along the Miami-Dade and Broward County Line to Miami Intermodal Center. The second project is State Road 836 Express Enhanced Bus Service, which intends to reduce congestion on the roadway and attract increased ridership and connectivity for MDT customers.

OIA coordinated with MDT and FIU in obtaining congressional support for these projects.

### **SECRETARY OF COMMERCE BRYSON TRAVELS TO MIAMI**

On Friday, Secretary of Commerce John E. Bryson held discussions at the Port of Miami and in Miami Gardens to discuss how South Florida small businesses provide a shining example of how local communities can help lead America on the continued road to economic recovery by growing exports and creating jobs. The Secretary was joined at Pavilion Furniture in Miami Gardens by Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez and Commissioner Barbara Jordan.

As a former CEO, Secretary Bryson has made it a priority to reach out to business leaders and advocate on their behalf within the Obama administration. The Secretary solicited feedback from the community on how this Administration can continue to better support companies looking for new export opportunities, and also how the Department of Commerce can better support American businesses so they are able to build their products in America and sell them around the globe. Also in attendance was Miami Gardens Mayor Shirley Gibson.

Prior to the event at Pavilion, the Secretary hosted a breakfast with the Miami District Export Council at PortMiami. The U.S. Department of Commerce has been working extensively with PortMiami and Director Bill Johnson on these issues.

## **BEACH RENOURISHMENT MEETING**

Today at 2:00 pm, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen joined Mayor Herrera Bower and City Manager Jorge Gonzalez to inspect the sand dredging and beach re-nourishment project taking place at 68th and Collins Avenue. This is one of several beach re-nourishment projects that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), along with local governments, are undertaking to replenish the sand at local beaches – major economic drivers for the region. The Congresswoman and members of the South Florida Congressional Delegation have been strong leaders in efforts at the federal and state level to obtain funding for this important project. In a press release from the Congresswoman's office:

*"This is an important ongoing project that will restock our beaches with sand creating a better place for tourists and locals alike. This project also creates a buffer against the dangerous hurricanes that can strike South Florida saving lives and money. I have been an advocate of this project in the US House and I look forward to continue the good work that all parties involved are undertaking. The final product will be a healthier and safer beach environment that will benefit all."*

Miami-Dade County Beach Program Manager Brian Flynn and OIA helped coordinate with USACE and officials from Miami-Dade County, Miami Beach, Key Biscayne and other stakeholder groups for the event.

## **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL UPDATE**

On Wednesday, the Senate passed its version of the Surface Transportation bill. The bill, S. 1813, passed by a wide margin. The vote was 74-22. The bill runs through next fiscal year and totals \$109 billion.

To achieve such bi-partisan support, the bill did not include any controversial provisions. Amendments were defeated to approve the Keystone pipeline, oil and gas drilling in Alaska and off the coasts, and to overturn the President's policy on health insurance and religious institutions. Even most of the highway and transit provisions were non-controversial. The bill funded the programs at current levels plus inflation. It consolidated programs and gave the States more flexibility on how to spend their transportation dollars.

The House is still in turmoil over the bill. The Speaker and other members of the House leadership have yet to find a version of the bill that can pass the House. Several versions of the bill have been floated. One version runs 5 years and costs \$260 billion. It also includes controversial energy provisions like allowing oil and gas drilling in Alaska. A number of conservative Republicans oppose the bill because of its size and

costs. Some Members want a shorter bill as it would cost less, while others want a longer bill to give the States the ability to plan long term projects.

The Speaker has said that if the House cannot develop its own version of the bill, he will consider the Senate version. There are technical problems with this approach but Republican House members understand that they either must come together to write their own bill or they will be forced to pass one that is very similar to the Senate version.

Another problem facing the House is that the current law expires on March 31. It is highly unlikely that the Congress will have a new bill in place before that deadline. As a result, Congress will need to pass an extension of the current law.

Next week the House will return to work on the bill. Given the competing factions in the House, many people expect that the House will eventually go along with a bill that is close to the Senate version. In the alternative, the House may wait until after the elections, with more extensions of the current law. *(Compiled in part by Akerman Senterfitt Boggs Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **REP. ROS-LEHTINEN HONORED AT ANNUAL MIAMI BEACH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

On Friday, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen was honored during the 4th Annual Miami Beach Women's Conference during their Lunch in the Garden event at the Miami Beach Botanical Garden. Miami Beach Mayor Matti Herrera Bower hosts this popular event that gathers prominent women from South Florida such as Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman, former County Commissioner the Honorable Katy Sorenson, the Honorable Elaine Bloom, Senator Gwen Margolis, State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Beth Littrell, a local lawyer. The Congresswoman was honored for her civic activism and legislative record in the Congress fighting for issues important to the community.

Said Ros-Lehtinen, "I am humbled by the recognition of so many worthy women in South Florida. The work we all do has as its main purpose the betterment of life for the residents of South Florida and the advancement of civil rights for all. It will be a wonderful event where our community's women leaders come together to celebrate the work we have accomplished and the work that lies ahead."

## **APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE**

The 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is knee deep into the budget process as it attempts to write the Fiscal Year 2013 federal budget. The President's budget was submitted to Congress a month ago. Since that time, a number of Congressional Committees have been holding hearings on the budgets for specific agencies. All the cabinet offices have appeared to discuss their respective agency budgets and the Congressional staff is digging into the details.

Congress will soon try to write the appropriations bills. There are twelve appropriations bills that, taken together, make up the entire federal budget. But before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees start writing the appropriations bills, they must agree on an overall ceiling for discretionary spending. In other words Congress first decides on how much it will spend on all the government's discretionary programs, then the Appropriations Committees take that overall number and divide it up between the federal departments and agencies.

In most years, the overall ceiling is determined by a budget resolution. The budget resolution is prepared by the House and Senate Budget Committees. The resolution establishes broad overall numbers -- how much will be spent on discretionary accounts, how much will be raised in taxes, and how big the deficit will be. When Congress is functioning smoothly, the House and Senate each pass their own versions of the budget resolution but then they resolve their differences and agree to final numbers. Those final numbers become binding.

This year the situation is different. Last year, when Congress passed the bill to increase the debt ceiling it included a provision that set a limit on discretionary spending for FY2013 at \$1.047 trillion. Passage of that legislation means that there is no need for the Congress to pass a budget resolution. They can go ahead and start marking up the Appropriations bills. That is what the Senate intends to do.

However, in the House, a large number of Members think the \$1.047 trillion ceiling for discretionary spending is too high. The number is \$4 billion more than the ceiling in FY2012. The House conservatives want to cut the budget. Some Republicans want to cut the number to \$1.028 trillion -- a cut of \$19 billion. Some have even suggested cutting it to \$931 billion. It is unclear what number the House Republicans will agree to, but it is safe to assume that it will be less than \$1.047 trillion. When that happens, it means the House and Senate will work from different budget ceilings. The bills will be significantly different and it will be very difficult to reconcile them.

The Appropriations bills may not be completed until after the November elections in the lame duck session. (*Compiled in part by Akerman Senterfitt Boggs Federal Lobbying Team*)

## **AAPA CENTENNIAL DINNER**

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) will hold their Centennial Dinner on Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup> in Washington. Attending the dinner along with PortMiami Director Bill Johnson will be Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mario Diaz-Balart, Frederica Wilson, David Rivera and Corrine Brown from Jacksonville. Accompanying the members are several of their key senior staff, including Chief of Staff to Rep. Wilson, Tom McDaniels, Art Estopinan, Chief of Staff to Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, Ian Rayder, Senior Policy Advisor to Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Deputy Chief of Staff to Rep. Rivera, Javier Correoso and Nick Martinelli Rep. Brown's Legislative Director. Also attending as guests of Director Johnson are Willie Ramos of the U.S. Department of

Commerce, Dean of FIU John Proni and Carlos Becerra of FIU's Washington, DC office.

## **CLIMATE COMMUNITIES**

The Climate Communities weekly webinar, "Model Ordinances, Codes and Policies to Achieve Energy Efficiency Goals" focused on local governments that have the authority to implement discrete enabling policies that influence the real estate market and drive demand for utility energy efficiency programs. Climate Communities said these policies can help to meet energy needs while addressing other community priorities, such as economic development, job creation or sustainability. Eric Mackres, a Senior Research and Local Policy Lead for American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), described several local policies that enable greater energy efficiency and related local government case studies, including building energy benchmarking, energy use disclosure ordinances, energy upgrade requirements, and building code revisions.

The webinar used the recent report released by the ACEEE, *The Role of Local Governments and Community Organizations as Energy Efficiency Implementation Partners: Case Studies and a Review of Trends* as an example that identifies a number policies and programs that local governments have implemented to achieve their energy goals.

The presentation highlighted four case studies from around the country that included:

- *New York City's Green Code Task Force*: The Task Force has identified changes to NYC codes that will bring buildings to the next level of energy and sustainability performance.
- *Berkley's Residential Energy Conservation Ordinance (RECO)*: RECO prescribes ten compliance measures required of homeowners that reduce energy used for space heating, hot water and lighting.
- *Austin's Energy Conservation Audit and Disclosure (ECAD) Ordinance*: ECAD requires properties within Austin and served by Austin Energy, the municipal utility, to undergo energy audits or ratings before the sale of the property or at other specified trigger points.
- *Washington D.C.'s Energy Benchmarking Requirement*: The Green Building Act of 2006 and the Clean and Affordable Energy Act of 2008 require that owners of large commercial buildings in the District of Columbia annually rate and disclose their building energy performance on a public website.

## **THE 2012 GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD**

On March 13<sup>th</sup> voters handed former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum two southern victories in Alabama and Mississippi, while former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney took Hawaii. On March 17, Missouri will hold their Caucus. In early February Missouri held a primary, which Senator Santorum won, but which did not award any delegates. Below are the remaining primaries for the month of March.

March 18 - Puerto Rico

March 20 - Illinois

March 24 - Louisiana

**NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: MARCH 19TH – MARCH 23RD**

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## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 19TH – MARCH 23RD, 2012**

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### **APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE – IMPLICATIONS FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

The House Committee on Appropriations solicited programmatic report language from members to include in the appropriation bills. The report language, even though it doesn't make specific requests on behalf of projects for the County in the way that earmarks had in the past, gives members the opportunity to advocate for general programs to have funding restored, increased or eliminated. The Miami-Dade County Congressional Delegation gave several programmatic requests to the committee that could have far reaching implications on the County.

- Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen urged for the inclusion of report language that would encourage the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop a pilot program for partnering with State and Local governments for use of DoD facilities in capacities that would benefit local job creation, without use of Federal dollars. The Congresswoman asked that the following be included in FY13 Defense Appropriations bill:

*The Committee encourages the Secretary of Defense to develop a pilot program, in conjunction with the Services, for cooperative agreements for conditional and use of certain multi-use installations by State and Local governments for public affairs activities that also benefit local job creation, including commercial activities that promote American technology, and are not unreasonably burdensome to accomplishing the inherent mission of the facility.*

This language would positively impact the feasibility of the **Miami International Aerospace Show**.

- Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart urged for the inclusion for language that would directly impact **PortMiami** with his request that said:

*Ensure adequate funding for O&M projects included in the President's FY13 budget within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget request.*

- Reps. Diaz-Balart, Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Frederica Wilson submitted a request that would ask for full funding for the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** program.
- Rep. Diaz-Balart also included in his request language to increase funding for **State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)** and **Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)**.

## **REP WILSON ANNOUNCES \$435,142 IN RESEARCH FUNDING FOR UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI**

Rep. Frederica Wilson announced this week a grant for \$435,142 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) awarded UM \$435,142 for the study of FGF-23 and the risk of stroke and cognitive decline.

*"I'm pleased to announce this critical funding for the UM School of Medicine," said Congresswoman Wilson. "As a member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, I believe supporting research and development in the sciences is vital for our nation's future. I look forward to UM and other South Florida institutions continuing to receive these important grants."*

## **REP DIAZ-BALART SPEAKS WITH FTA ADMINISTRATOR ROGOFF**

On Thursday morning, Federal Transit Administration Administrator Peter Rogoff testified before the House Committee on Appropriations, Transportation, Housing & Urban Development Subcommittee. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, who sits on the committee,



thanked the Administrator for working with Miami-Dade County and Mr. Rogoff expressed a willingness to continue working with the County and Miami-Dade Transit to resolve the remaining issues.

## **REP WASSERMAN SCHULTZ INTRODUCES AMENDMENT TO PROTECTS SENIORS**

On Wednesday, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz introduced an amendment to prevent cuts in the 2013 Budget that would be detrimental to seniors across the country. The amendment would ensure that funding does not run out for seniors and people with disabilities who rely on Medicaid assistance to help with the costs of their nursing home care and other necessary services. In addition, the amendment accounts for low-income Medicare beneficiaries who are also eligible for Medicaid, and works to ensure that they would receive assistance for paying their premiums and out-of-pocket costs.

## **SENATOR NELSON JOINS LETTER ON FY2013 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING**

A group of 34 Senators, including Senator Nelson, sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee in support of \$3.3 billion in formula funds for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in FY2013. The President's FY2013 budget proposes level funding for CDBG at \$2.95 billion. The Committee will begin marking up the FY2013 appropriations bills later in the spring. OIA, along with the Federal contract lobbyists, worked with a large coalition of government stakeholders to gain Senator Nelson's support for this initiative.

## **SECRETARY OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES VISITS MIAMI**

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius visited Miami on Tuesday to discuss the Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Obama two years ago, and to inform local residents that should Gov. Rick Scott decline to create the state insurance exchange required under the law that would extend private coverage to the uninsured, the federal government will do so for the state.

The Secretary was joined at the Jessie Trice Community Health Center in Brownsville by University of Miami President Donna Shalala, who served as HHS secretary during the Clinton administration. The Secretary discussed women's health issues as well as preventive screenings for men and women, Medicare and a provision in the Act that makes it illegal for insurers to deny coverage to individuals suffering from pre-existing conditions.

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court will hold hearings on the constitutionality of the law.

## **REPUBLICANS INTRODUCE 2013 BUDGET RESOLUTION**

On Tuesday, the House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) released his FY 2013 Budget Resolution - *The Path to Prosperity: A Blueprint for American Renewal*. Chairman Ryan's proposal sets the FY 2013 discretionary spending limit at \$1.028 trillion, which is two percent, or \$19 billion, less than the cap of \$1.047 trillion established in the Budget Control Act (BCA). House Democrats will release their FY 2013 budget proposal next week, which is expected to closely resemble President Obama's FY 2013 Budget Proposal.

The House Budget Committee held its markup of the measure on Wednesday. The measure passed the committee along party lines by a vote of 19-18 (two Republicans voted with the Democrats). As noted above, it reduces the overall discretionary spending cap only two percent from the BCA; conservative House Republicans are pushing for an eleven percent (\$116 billion) reduction to \$931 billion.

Highlights of Chairman Ryan's proposal:

- Reduces spending by \$5.3 trillion and lowers taxes by \$2 trillion over ten years.
- Incorporates many of the budget reform and transparency measures proposed in a 10-bill package by the House Budget Committee in December 2011.
- Establishes a \$554 billion cap on Defense spending for FY 2013 (nearly level to FY 2012).
- Promotes new energy exploration.
- Privatizes Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae.
- Repeals healthcare reform law.
- Establishes a premium support model for Medicare – Medicare beneficiaries would have the option to purchase coverage through a new Medicare Exchange or to remain in traditional Medicare. The Medicare program would provide a payment to offset the premium for individuals electing to purchase health insurance through the Medicare Exchange. This would not impact existing or near-term retirees.
- Converts the federal share of Medicaid into a block grant.
- Suggests a path be established to ensure the solvency of Social Security.
- Repeals the Independent Payment Advisory Board.
- Caps non-economic damages in medical liability lawsuits.
- Calls for the consolidation of duplicative federal job-training programs into a streamlined workforce development system with fewer funding streams. The proposal is based on language provided in H.R. 3610, which would consolidate 33 federal programs into four "Workforce Investment Funds":
  - *The Workforce Investment Fund* – to provide job training services to adults, unemployed workers, and youth seeking employment;
  - *The State Youth Workforce Investment Fund* – to serve the nation's disadvantaged youth, with a focus on school completion;
  - *The Veterans Workforce Investment Fund* – to deliver employment and training services to America's veterans; and
  - *The Targeted Populations Workforce Investment Fund* – to provide assistance to special populations, including Native Americans and seasonal farm workers.

- Proposes to reform the Credit Reform Act by authorizing the use of fair-value accounting principles for any legislation dealing with federal loan and loan-guarantee programs (including FHA and federal student-loan programs).
- Proposes two individual income tax brackets of 10 percent and 25 percent (there are currently six and the top rate is 35 percent).
- Reduces the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent and establishes a “territorial” system in which companies pay tax on income earned in the United States (this was proposed last year by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI)).
- Repeals the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT).
- Converts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) into a block grant and cuts \$122.5 billion from the program over ten years.

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- ***Avoids Sequestration.*** The proposal provides budget reconciliation instructions to six authorizing committees to produce legislation that achieves necessary spending cuts (\$261 billion over 10 years) to avoid the sequestration process mandated by the Budget Control Act and scheduled to go into effect in January 2013. The committees are directed to report their recommendations by April 27, 2012 and the intent is to bring the reconciliation to the House floor in May. The six committees and the level of spending cuts they are directed to recommend include:

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- Agriculture - \$33.2 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$8.2 billion for FY 2012 and FY 2013);
- Energy and Commerce - \$96.76 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$3.75 billion for FY 2012 and FY 2013);
- Financial Services - \$29.8 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$3 billion for FY 2012 and FY 2013);
- Judiciary - \$39.7 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$100 million for FY 2012 and FY 2013);
- Oversight and Government Reform - \$78.9 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$2.2 billion for FY 2012 and FY 2013); and
- Ways and Means - \$53 billion for FY 2012 – FY 2022 (\$1.2 billion for FY 2012 and FY 2013).

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Chairman Ryan’s proposal assumes these cuts will be achieved in part through transforming public sector pensions to work more like those in the private sector, restructuring the federal government’s role in financial services, and changes to entitlement programs. This is reflected by the role of the six committees – the Agriculture Committee will likely target food stamps and farm subsidies; the Energy and Commerce Committee oversees Medicaid and portions of the healthcare reform law;

the Oversight and Government Reform Committee controls federal workers and their retirement system; and the Ways and Means Committee oversees Medicare (taxes are not expected to be addressed).

By utilizing the reconciliation process, Chairman Ryan concedes the purpose of this procedure is primarily for political positioning leading up to the November elections. For a budget reconciliation to take effect, both chambers would have to adopt the same budget resolution and the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has repeatedly stated that an FY 2013 budget resolution is unnecessary because the spending limit is already established (in the Budget Control Act). (*Compiled in part by Patton Boggs Federal Lobbying Team*)

## **TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE**

On Wednesday, March 21st, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-FL) announced that he would be introducing a clean three-month extension of SAFETEA-LU, extending current law through June 30th. Earlier today, Chairman Mica filed the extension as H.R. 4239, and Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) confirmed at his weekly press conference that the House will be moving forward with the stop-gap measure next week as the Leadership “continues to work with our Members on how best to address rebuilding our Nation’s infrastructure and addressing rising gas prices and the need to have more domestic energy production.”

The introduction and expected passage of the three-month extension in the House comes as Senate Democrats have increased their calls for the House to instead take up and pass the Senate’s two-year reauthorization bill, known as MAP-21, which passed the Senate by a bi-partisan vote of 74-22 last week. On Wednesday, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Nick Rahall (D-WV), Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and Rep. Tim Bishop (D-NY) formally introduced MAP-21 in the House as H.R. 14 -- along with 80 co-sponsors. House Democrats also attempted to attach MAP-21 as an amendment to unrelated legislation being considered on the House floor, but that move was blocked by the Majority on a party-line basis.

The three month extension in the House reflects the realities of the legislative calendar – the House is scheduled to consider health care and budget matters for the remainder of March, before Congress goes on a two week spring recess for the first part of April – as well as the continuing effort to build consensus around H.R. 7 as the path forward in the House. However, it also reflects a broader political calculation that moving H.R. 7 and setting up a conference with the Senate allows House Republicans to continue pressing the domestic energy provisions in H.R. 7, a key election-year issue for Republicans, at a time of increasing national concern about rising gas prices. This focus on the energy production portions of H.R. 7 and the link to gas prices was reinforced in the Speaker’s statement today, as well as Chairman Mica’s statement on the extension which specifically emphasized that, “We continue to believe that linking energy and infrastructure is the responsible thing to do in order to meet our long-term needs.”

While Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-CA), and Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) have all expressed their opposition to a stop-gap measure and called on the House to instead pass MAP-21, most observers believe that the Senate will not force a showdown with the House over the extension, and that the more likely course is for the Senate to accept the three-month extension as the House continues working to build consensus for its own long-term bill. (*Compiled in part by Patton Boggs Federal Lobbying Team*)

## **AAPA CENTENNIAL DINNER**

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) held their Centennial Dinner on Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup> in Washington. Attending the dinner along with PortMiami Director Bill Johnson and OIA was Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart and Frederica Wilson. Also attending as guests of Director Johnson were Willie Ramos of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and Carlos Becerra of FIU's Washington, DC office.

## **OIA MEETS WITH FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA**

On Thursday, OIA, along with Federal contract lobbyist Akerman Senterfitt, met with Fred Oladeinde, President of the Foundation for Democracy in Africa to discuss funding opportunities for the Foundation and other areas of cooperation with Miami-Dade County.

## **THE 2012 GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD**

In the past week, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney won Puerto Rico and Illinois. The Republican primary calendar continues with tomorrow's Louisiana election.

## **NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: MARCH 26TH – MARCH 30TH**

*The House will be in session next week.*

*The Senate will be in session next week.*

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 26TH – MARCH 30TH, 2012**

**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*

### **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENTS TRAVEL TO DC**

This week, Miami-Dade County departments traveled to Washington, DC for conferences. During their time in Washington, the departments took the opportunity to meet with the County's Congressional delegation to discuss issues of importance to Miami-Dade.

- **Public Housing and Community Development Department** – Director Gregg Fortner and select members of his staff attended the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Legislative Conference earlier this week. During the meetings with Congressional offices, Director Fortner discussed the ongoing issue with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on the recapture of Section 8 Vouchers while the county's Public Housing Department was in HUD receivership. This is an issue that the entire County delegation has been actively engaged in and supportive of. The Director, as well as members of the Board of County Commissioners including Commissioner Lynda Bell, have met with HUD officials to try and negotiate a settlement of this ongoing issue. Additionally, Director Fortner discussed other projects including the use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds that were used to build green efficient communities as part of the Hope VI Development. Director Fortner and his staff also urged members to support funding for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in the FY2013 Appropriations bill.
- **Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces** - Allison Diego, Director for Business Development, Fundraising and Advocacy for Miami-Dade County Parks (MDPR), Recreation and Open Spaces was in Washington to participate in the 2012 National Legislative Forum of the National Recreation Park Association. Ms. Diego met with Miami-Dade County Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and David Rivera, in addition to meeting with staff from Senators Rubio and Nelson, and Reps. Diaz-Balart, Wasserman Shultz and Frederica Wilson. Ms. Diego discussed the implementation of MDPR's Parks and Open Space Master Plan, the impact of funding from Community Development Block Grants and programs under the Transportation Reauthorization bill. Ms. Diego also invited each office

to attend the 2012 Great Park Summit on Wednesday, April 18, 2012 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

- **Homeless Trust** – Director David Raymond participated in meetings with the staff from Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio as well as from the office of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart. Director Raymond discussed HR 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011, sponsored by Rep Judy Biggert (IL). The Director thanked all of offices for their support of homeless issues and asked staff to please thank Senator Nelson and Rep. Diaz-Balart for their support on the Homeless Trust's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issue with the Airbase property and gave them an update on its progress. All offices expressed their support on homeless issues. Director Raymond also spoke with all of them about Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), Departments of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) work with veterans, and the new HUD grant awards which the county is grateful for. As part of his trip to Washington, Director Raymond also met with officials from HUD and HHS.

## **CONGRESSWOMAN WILSON ANNOUNCES HOMETOWN RALLY FOR FAMILY OF TRAYVON MARTIN ON SUNDAY**

Rep. Frederica Wilson announced that a hometown rally for the family of Trayvon Martin will be held on Sunday, April 1, 2012 at 4:00 pm in Bayfront Park in Miami. Joining Trayvon's parents, Tracy Martin and Sybrina Fulton, Congresswoman Wilson will be Miami Commissioner Barbara Jordan, Miami Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, Congresswoman Corinne Brown and Congressman Al Green (Texas), FL State Representative Cynthia Stafford, singer Betty Wright, actress JoMarie Payton and many other elected officials, community leaders and clergy. National figures attending the hometown rally include Chaka Khan and Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Gates open for the public at 1:00 pm, and members of the press can start setting up at 12:00 noon. For more information, contact Gwen Belton at [gwen.belton@mail.house.gov](mailto:gwen.belton@mail.house.gov) or via cell at (305) 407-4270.

## **MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RECEIVES 75 VOUCHERS FOR VA MEDICAL CENTER**

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki announced that HUD will provide \$72.6 million to public housing agencies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to supply permanent housing and case management for more than 10,000 homeless veterans. Among the recipients of this award were Miami Dade Public Housing and Community Development which received 75 vouchers for the Bruce W. Carter VA Medical Center (\$795,467).

“It’s a national disgrace that one out of every six men and women in our shelters once wore a uniform to serve our country,” said HUD Secretary Donovan. “But we know that by providing housing assistance and case management services, we can significantly reduce the number of veterans living on our streets. Working together, HUD, VA and local housing agencies are making real progress toward ending veteran homelessness once and for all.”

“Under the leadership of President Obama, we have made significant progress in the fight to end homelessness among veterans, but more work remains,” said VA Secretary Shinseki. “The partnership between the federal government and community agencies across the country has strengthened all of our efforts to honor our veterans and keep us on track to prevent and eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015.”

The grants announced today are part of \$75 million appropriated for Fiscal Year 2012 to support the housing needs of approximately 10,500 homeless veterans. VA Medical Centers (VAMC) provide supportive services and case management to eligible homeless veterans. This is the first of two rounds of the 2012 HUD-VASH funding. HUD expects to announce the remaining funding by the end of this summer.

VAMCs work closely with homeless veterans then refer them to public housing agencies for these vouchers, based upon a variety of factors, most importantly the duration of the homelessness and the need for longer term more intensive support to obtain and maintain permanent housing. The HUD-VASH program includes both the rental assistance the voucher provides and the comprehensive case management that VAMC staff provides.

Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program rent privately owned housing and generally contribute no more than 30 percent of their income toward rent. VA offers eligible homeless veterans clinical and supportive services through its medical centers across the U.S., Guam and Puerto Rico.

## **JOBS ORIGINATED THROUGH LAUNCHING TRAVEL (JOLT) ACT INTRODUCED; BIPARTISAN BILL SPONSORED BY SENATOR RUBIO**

On Monday, a bipartisan package sponsored by U.S. Senators Marco Rubio, Charles Schumer, Mike Lee, Amy Klobuchar, Barbara Mikulski, Roy Blunt and Mark Kirk was introduced that will reform outdated visa laws to cut through red tape that has caused a lag in foreign travel to the U.S. The Jobs Originated through Launching Travel (“JOLT”) Act aims to boost the U.S. economy and create jobs by jumpstarting international travel to the United States. The bill could add nearly \$100 billion to the economy over the next decade and create nearly 700,000 more American jobs. The JOLT Act was the subject of a Senate hearing on Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Last July, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Javier Souto sponsored and Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz and Commissioner Rebeca Sosa co-sponsored a resolution unanimously adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, calling on the



federal government and Congress to ease visa restrictions in certain countries, including Brazil, provided that adequate homeland security measures are in place.

“Increasing international tourism to the United States will have a very important impact on our nation’s future economic growth,” said Senator Rubio. “Congress needs to pass legislation that will reduce unnecessary roadblocks that cause many international tourists to choose to travel to other countries. At the same time, we must implement policies that reinforce and strengthen the security of our nation from outside threats. The JOLT Act accomplishes both of these goals and it allows the United States to become more competitive in the global travel market. I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of this bill and I urge my Senate colleagues to join in the effort to pass this bill.”

International travel to the United States represents a significant component of the United States’ economy. Studies show that, on average, each overseas visitor spends about \$4,000 in America per visit. In 2011, foreign nationals spent more than \$134 billion total in travel to America. This spending supported 1.8 million American jobs, and represented 8.7 percent of U.S. exports of goods and services. However, in the past ten years the United States market share of worldwide overseas travel market has dropped from a 17 percent share to less than 12 percent.

***Summary of The Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel (“JOLT”) Act***  
*(as provided by a joint statement from the Senators)*

**Expediting Priority Visitors**

Currently, many spontaneous travelers do not travel to the United States because of the waiting times for visas. Just as the State Department charges an extra fee to expedite the processing of a U.S. passport, and USCIS charges an extra fee to expedite the processing of an immigration application, so too should the State Department charge an extra fee to expedite the processing of a nonimmigrant visa.

This section requires the Secretary of State to develop “premium processing” for B-1 and B-2 visas (tourist and business travel visas). Under premium processing, unless compelling security concerns exist, a visa will be issued within 3 business days from the date a visa is requested.

This section also authorizes the State Department to charge a fee sufficient to recover the costs of premium processing and to recover costs that will increase capacity to more quickly process B-1 and B-2 visas in India, China, and Brazil through the use of: (1) technology; and (2) creation of “mobile interview units” to process visa applications and to conduct visa interviews in cities of over 1,000,000 people with no U.S. embassy or consulate. This will ultimately lead to faster processing of all visa applications.

## **Encouraging Canadian Tourism to the United States**

Under current law, without a visa, Canadian citizens are not permitted to remain in the United States for longer than 180 days. Many Canadians would remain in the United States for a longer period of time during periods when Canadian weather is still cold if they had a legal ability to do so. In addition, Canadians who currently return to Canada after 180 days are unable to take day-trips across the border to northern-border-states in America.

This bill allows Canadians who are: (1) over age 50 (with derivative benefits to a spouse and minor children); (2) who can show that they own a residence in the United States or have purchased rental or hotel accommodations in the United States for the duration of their stay; and (3) are not otherwise inadmissible – to stay at least 240 days per year. These Canadians are not permitted to have work authorization for this visa or access to any government benefits. This visa will spur Canadian consumption in the United States.

## **Encouraging Chinese Tourism to the United States**

Currently, Chinese nationals must apply for new U.S. visas every year to travel to the United States, while travelers from other countries can receive up to 10-year, multiple entry visas. As Chinese applicants are treated differently, the State Department must dedicate significant resources to processing visa renewals, rather than facilitating legitimate travel by new visitors.

A one-year visa expiration is disruptive and expensive not only for Chinese visa applicants, but also for American businesses and universities. If Chinese travelers want to take an annual trip to the United States, and do not live in a city where a U.S. consulate is located, they must incur hundreds or thousands of dollars in expenses (and take time off from their work or studies) to complete the mandatory face-to face interview.

This bill encourages the State Department to issue Chinese nationals longer visas than one year.

## **Incentives for Foreign Visitors Visiting the United States During Low Peak Seasons**

One of the greatest contributing factors to high visa demand is the summer travel season. Given that visa interview wait times typically lengthen during the summer months, this bill permits the State Department to lower visa application fees during off-peak seasons to give travelers the incentive to apply for visas when demand is lower. The overall increase in visa application volume is estimated to make up for lower per-application fees. By increasing incentives and tiered peak and off-peak fees, the State Department can begin to spread demand across all four seasons and make visa demand more manageable overall.

## **Updating the Visa Waiver Program**

Currently, Poland is the only member of the 25-country Schengen area not able to travel to the United States under the [US Visa Waiver program](#). The Visa Waiver program gives citizens of selected countries the ability to travel to the US under the [ESTA](#) program, rather than go through the more lengthy and complicated US Tourist Visa application process. Poland has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the U.S. over the past two decades on issues that include deployment of troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, willingness to serve as a forward outpost for our missile defense shield, and being a reliable voice on behalf of the trans-Atlantic partnership in European Union councils.

This section amends the Immigration and Nationality Act regarding the visa waiver program to: (1) authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate program countries; (2) adjust the criteria for visa refusal rates to permit entry into the program if a country has a low visa overstay rate; (3) set a maximum 3% visa overstay rate for program countries; and (4) revise probationary status and program termination provisions. It also directs the Comptroller General to review the Secretary of Homeland Security's methods for tracking aliens entering and exiting the United States and for detecting visa overstays. These revisions would likely lead to Poland's admission into the Visa Waiver Program.

## **Expediting Entry for Priority Visitors**

The global entry program is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Though intended for frequent international travelers, there is no minimum number of trips necessary to qualify for the program. Participants may enter the United States by using automated kiosks located at select airports.

At the moment, U.S. Customs and Border Protection lacks the ability to add specific foreign nationals to the global-entry prescreening system if they are not nationals of one of the "participating countries" that the United States has a reciprocal agreement with. This creates problems for certain high-priority visitors with decision-making capacity to bring important international events—such as the Olympics, the World Cup, conventions, etc.—to the United States.

This section would permit Customs and Border Protection to add important foreign dignitaries to the global entry program on a "case-by-case" basis if they

are employed by an organization that maintains a strong working relationship with the United States and do not pose security risks.

### **Expediting Visa Processing**

This section sets standards for visa processing which says that, upon enactment, visa interviews should be conducted within 15 days of requesting an appointment. 1 year after enactment, visa interviews should be conducted within 10 days of requesting an appointment. There are exceptions to these processing times for security reasons and for national emergencies.

## **SENATE HOLDS HEARING ON PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TO U.S.**

In conjunction to the aforementioned bill sponsored by Senator Marco Rubio and several of his colleagues, the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security held a hearing on Tuesday titled "The Economic Imperative for Promoting International Travel to the United States" which aimed at examining the promotion of international travel to the U.S. Participating in the hearing were Thomas J. Donohue, president and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Roger J. Dow, president and CEO, U.S. Travel Association.

The Senate bill and its House companion, H.R. 3855, would have a significant impact on Miami-Dade County and has the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. OIA has worked with the county's Congressional delegation to gain their support as well as lobbied for this effort as part of a coalition with the Chamber and the U.S. Travel Association.

Mike Quigley's bill, the *Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act (H.R. 3855)*, would expand the visa waiver program and significantly increase inbound travel to Miami-Dade County. There is significant support from the Illinois congressional delegation (the program would expand waivers to Poland) and the President endorsed the bill during his May 2011 trip to Poland. More importantly for Miami-Dade County, the bill also includes provisions expanding the visa waiver program to Brazil, Argentina and Chile, as well as Taiwan.

The positive economic impact for Miami-Dade County of just Brazil obtaining visa waiver status cannot be overstated, as a recent New York Times article pointed out: "According to the U.S. Commerce Department, 1.2 million Brazilians visited the U.S. in 2010 and spent \$5.9 billion, or \$4,940 for each visitor. Most of the Brazilians who come to the United States visit Florida, and in the first nine months of 2011, an estimated 1.1 million Brazilians spent \$1.6 billion in the state, an increase of nearly 60 percent from the previous year. Among foreign nations, only Canada sends more visitors to Florida."

## **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL UPDATE**

Thursday both the House and the Senate passed a bill to extend the current transportation legislation for another 90 days in order to give themselves time to complete work on a new longer term bill. The President has indicated that he will sign it into law. This guarantees that the nation's highway and transit programs will continue uninterrupted -- at least for another 90 days.

To recap where we are. In 2005 Congress passed the last major rewrite of the Surface Transportation Bill, called the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU originally expired in September 2009. However since that time, Congress has been unable to write a new version. Eight times it has extended the old law. The eighth extension ran until March 31, 2012.

The Senate passed its version of the bill, S. 1813, on March 14, by a bipartisan vote of 74-22. The bill runs for the remainder of this fiscal year and through next fiscal year (FY2013). It funds highway and transit programs at last year's levels, plus inflation. It consolidates a number of federal programs, gives the states more flexibility on how to spend the money they get and streamlines some of the approval processes. The bill is short in duration in order to minimize the costs.

The House Republicans have had a much harder time passing their own version of the bill. The Senate bill is fairly uncontroversial, because it doesn't do much to break new ground. The House leadership wants to write a bold dramatic bill -- but it can't find the votes to pass it. The House leadership wants the bill to last for four or five years. To cover the increased costs, the leadership wants to promote oil and gas drilling. They want to streamline the approval process more than the Senate bill by rolling back some environmental rules. All these things are very controversial. The Administration opposes the House bill. The Senate leadership opposes the House bill and the House Democrats oppose the bill. To date the House has not considered the bill on the floor.

With the House in disarray and the deadline fast approaching, the House simply extended the existing law for a ninth time, this time for 90 days.

Over the next few weeks, the House leadership will continue to meet with individual Republican House members to see if they can write a version of the bill that can pass the House. If they can succeed, they will go to conference with the Senate. If they can't they will be forced either to accept the Senate bill (perhaps making a few changes) or extending the existing law past the elections, when, they hope, the Senate will also become Republican controlled.

Both the House and the Senate will be out of session for the next two weeks.  
(Compiled in part by Akerman Senterfitt Federal Lobbying Team)

## **HOUSE FY 2013 BUDGET RESOLUTION APPROVED**

After voting down six alternative budgets, the House on Thursday, as expected, approved Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's (WI) FY 2013 Budget Resolution

(H.Con.Res. 112) by a vote of 228 to 191. Ten Republicans joined the entire Democrat caucus in voting against the measure. The measure sets the overall discretionary spending cap for House appropriators to use in drafting their FY 2013 spending bills at \$1.028 trillion.

Earlier this week Republican Appropriators expressed concern when the Budget Committee released its report to accompany the resolution and was found to include a provision that “any future disaster-relief-designated spending will be fully offset within the discretionary levels provided in this Resolution.” However, an understanding between House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (KY) and Chairman Ryan, allowing Chairman Rogers to “ignore” the committee report language requiring the offset of emergency disaster assistance as he prepared the FY 2013 spending bills was approved by leadership prior to today’s vote.

As previously reported, with the Senate vowing to stick to the discretionary spending cap of \$1.047 trillion established in last year’s Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25), the House resolution will never be taken up in the Senate, but will serve several purposes: (1) it establishes fiscal talking points for Republicans heading into the elections; (2) it sets the Republican “bar” for deficit reduction negotiations expected to occupy much of the lame duck session; (3) it instructs six committees to come up with the spending cuts necessary to avoid sequestration in time for a May vote; and (4) it ensures another very contentious and prolonged appropriations reconciliation process.

As noted above, six budget alternatives were considered during House floor consideration of the resolution, all of which were rejected:

- **Democratic Caucus Substitute (163 - 262; 22 Democrats joined the Republicans in voting against the amendment).** The Democratic proposal incorporated much of President Obama’s FY 2013 budget request and recent jobs proposals. It included a 6-year surface transportation proposal; provided significant funding for transportation jobs, infrastructure, education initiatives, the Veterans Jobs Corps, and the hiring of police and fire personnel; protected Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security; supported the Affordable Care Act; ended Bush-era tax cuts for millionaires and corporate tax loopholes; and established the Buffett Rule.
- **Republican Study Committee Substitute (136 - 285).** The RSC plan included many of the same fiscal principles as Chairman Ryan’s proposal, although it established an FY 2013 discretionary spending cap of \$931 billion and froze the cap through 2017, allowing only increases corresponding with inflation going forward. The RSC said the plan would balance the budget in five years without revenue increases. The proposal also: increased the Medicare eligibility age and phased-in the Social Security retirement age to 70 for those born after 1958; set two individual tax rates of 15 and 25 percent and a corporate tax rate of 25 percent; provided for Congressional approval of agency regulations; called for the sale of 5 percent of federal lands; and eliminated the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting, the Economic Development Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Labor Relations Board, the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and a number of Agriculture programs.

- **Bipartisan (Simpson-Bowles) Substitute (38 – 382).** The plan proposed by Jim Cooper (TN) and Steve LaTourette (OH) was based on the President's 2010 National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, led by former Senator Alan Simpson (WY) and Erskine Bowles, President Clinton's Chief of Staff. The Simpson-Bowles plan, which reduces the deficit by \$4 trillion over 10 years through 2/3 spending cuts and 1/3 tax reform, was believed by many to be a starting point for a bipartisan grand bargain (in fact, stand-alone legislative efforts are reportedly underway in both the House and the Senate). Today's vote reflects otherwise.
- **Progressive Caucus Substitute (78 – 346).** The "Budget for All" proposed the expiration of the Bush-era tax rates and the elimination of a number of other tax loopholes. It also called for a "no cuts" policy for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits; the end of military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan; public financing of Congressional and Presidential elections; and a public health care option.
- **Congressional Black Caucus Substitute (107 – 314).** The CBC plan reduced the deficit by \$3.4 trillion over 10 years; called for tax reform including the Buffett Rule and a millionaire surcharge; proposed a public health option; and increased funding for education, jobs, healthcare services, and research and development.
- **Mulvaney Substitute (0 – 414).** Congressman Mick Mulvaney (SC) put forth a proposal that was reportedly based on the Congressional Budget Office scoring of President Obama's FY 2013 Budget Proposal.

*(Compiled in part by Patton Boggs Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **CONGRESSWOMAN WILSON ANNOUNCES \$2,926,600 IN RESEARCH FUNDING FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI'S MILLER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

Rep. Frederica Wilson announced seven research grants this week, totaling \$2,926,600, for the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine awarded by various institutes at the National Institutes of Health, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The supported projects and their corresponding awards are listed below:

- Molecular Mechanisms of Notch Signaling in Neoplasia - \$262,065
- Acquisition of a Biacore T200 for Molecular Interaction Studies - \$350,959
- Cell Based Therapy for Non-Ischemic Dilated Cardiomyopathy - \$715,544

- Functional Outcomes in Older Adults with Schizophrenia - \$267,750
- Modulation of Rett-Like Phenotypes in Mouse Models of Rett Syndrome - \$229,500
- Role of Pannexin1 in Ischemic Injury of Retinal Ganglion Cells - \$372,710
- Role of Toll-Like Receptor Signaling in Retinal Ischemia - \$364,036

“I’m pleased to announce these grants for the UM School of Medicine,” said Congresswoman Wilson. “As a member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, I believe supporting research and development in the sciences is vital for our nation’s future. These grants will bolster UM’s efforts to study diseases affecting millions of Americans. I encourage UM and other South Florida institutions to remain competitive in pursuing federal grants.”

## **CONGRESSMAN DIAZ-BALART’S “FCC FOIA TRANSPARENCY” AMENDMENT PASSES THE HOUSE**

On Tuesday, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart proposed the “FCC FOIA Transparency” amendment. It was adopted and included in H.R. 3309, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Reform Act of 2012. Diaz-Balart’s amendment would require the FCC to implement new policies and practices to promote greater public disclosure of how the agency handles the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) requests.

*“My amendment was in response to overwhelming data demonstrating the FCC’s apparent lack of transparency and openness with the American people. In FY 2011, the FCC denied more than 46% of the FOIA requests it processed, compared to about 7% across the entire federal government.*

*“President Obama and Chairman Genachowski have publicly stated that they will be the most open and transparent administration in history, which is a goal I think we all share. My amendment will provide accountability and shed light on controversies like the one dealing with LightSquared, which appears to have political ties.*

*“Requiring the FCC to take additional steps will help bring the agency in line with its responsibilities for openness, transparency, and public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. More importantly, these steps will give the American public confidence that the FCC is responsive to requests made by citizens and is in fact sharing information the public is entitled to receive.”*

## **HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES SECURING MARITIME ACTIVITIES THROUGH RISK-BASED TARGETING FOR PORT SECURITY ACT**

The House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security gave a voice vote approval to an amended bill (HR 4251) aimed at identifying inefficiencies and waste in port security programs and increasing maritime security. Before backing the



measure, the panel adopted a substitute amendment adding provisions to boost maritime security cooperation between Canada and the United States and streamline the Transportation Worker Identification Credential program. This legislation would positively impact PortMiami and OIA will continue to monitor the bill as it moves to the full legislative body.

## **SENATOR NELSON JOINS LETTER ON FY2013 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING**

A group of 34 Senators, including Senator Nelson, sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee in support of \$3.3 billion in formula funds for the CDBG program in FY2013 on Friday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The President's FY2013 budget proposes level funding for CDBG at \$2.95 billion. The recently passed House budget for FY2013, which has zero chance of passing the Senate, would further gut funding for CDBG. The Committee will begin marking up the FY2013 appropriations bills later in the spring. OIA, along with the Federal contract lobbyists, worked with a large coalition of government stakeholders to gain Senator Nelson's support for this initiative.

## **CLIMATE COMMUNITIES**

Thursday's Climate Communities Webinar, led by Erin Brandt, an Energy Planner with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in Boston, Massachusetts, was titled "Mobilizing Community Support for Energy Efficiency Retrofits: Outreach Tools, Financial Incentives and Partnership Building." The webinar discussed energy utilities across the country that have developed a variety of incentives to encourage energy efficiency, and that these efforts are often divorced from the sustainability programs of the communities where they are located. Climate Communities said that, "local governments have demonstrated a strong interest in improving residential and commercial energy efficiency, but frequently don't think to leverage existing utility incentives to achieve those goals." As a result Ms. Brandt highlighted two successful energy efficiency engagement initiatives implemented in Massachusetts: the New Bedford Community Mobilization Initiative and the Marshfield Energy Challenge.

According to Ms. Brandt, The New Bedford Community Mobilization Initiative was a pilot program that aimed to increase energy efficiency efforts for households with incomes between 60% and 120% of state median income, and create green jobs in New Bedford. The Marshfield Energy Challenge was developed to address increasing electricity demand and to relieve peak loads in the town by using demand-side resources, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and direct load control. Both projects included the participation of local government, the electric utility (NSTAR) and other key stakeholders. As stated on the webinar, "implementing an effective community-wide energy efficiency program requires several key elements. First, a carefully planned and executed outreach strategy that can penetrate the residential and

commercial sectors. Second, compelling financial incentives are necessary to move consumers to act. And third, the development of lasting partnerships that can leverage participant's objectives and strengths."

## **THE 2012 GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD**

Senator Rick Santorum won last Saturday's Republican Primary election in Louisiana. The primary calendar shifts to Washington DC, Maryland and Wisconsin on Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: APRIL 2ND – APRIL 6TH**

*The House will not be in session next week.*

*The Senate will not be in session next week.*