

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

**MARCH 4 – MARCH 9, 2013**

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

*THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **VICE-CHAIRWOMAN BELL AND COMMISSIONER HEYMAN ATTEND NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**

Last weekend, Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Vice-Chairwoman Lynda Bell and Commissioner Sally Heyman, their staffs and OIA, participated in the annual NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, DC.

The NACo Legislative Conference and brings over 2,000 elected and appointed county officials from across the country to focus on legislative issues facing county government. Attendees hear from key Administration officials and members of Congress and attend policy workshops that help inform and develop NACo policy positions to be advocated before the federal government.

The Commissioners and OIA participated in meetings for the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee, Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee, Transportation (Transit, Freight/Rail and Ports) Steering Committee and the Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC).

Among the highlights were sessions and speeches from White House, department and agency staff as well as experts in a variety of areas. Additionally, renowned author of "All the Presidents Men," Bob Woodward addressed the conference as did Attorney General Eric Holder, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senator Roy Blunt of Missouri, Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Congressman Lee Terry of Nebraska, among others.

If you would like additional information on resolutions, fact sheets, presentations or general information from the conference please contact OIA and we will be happy to furnish you with them.

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNS THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT**

On Thursday, President Obama signed legislation to strengthen and reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. The new law will provide resources for thousands of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault -- and better equip law enforcement officials to stop violence before it starts.

Last week, the House joined the Senate in passing the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization bill by a vote of 286-138. The Senate passed the bill 78-22 two weeks ago. The five-year renewal extends the law's protections to LGBT, Native American and immigrant victims. Additionally the legislation provides for more rape kits as well as a national

registry of forensic evidence from sexual assault cases, strengthens criminal anti-trafficking statutes and addresses domestic violence on American college campuses. Senator Nelson voted in favor of the legislation while Senator Rubio voted against it. In the House, all five members of the county's Congressional delegation voted for the bill.

During the bill signing ceremony, President Obama said the following:

*"Today is about the millions of women -- the victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault -- who are out there right now looking for a lifeline, looking for support. Because of this bill, they'll continue to have access to all the services that Joe (Biden) first helped establish 19 years ago: the national hotline, network of shelters, protection orders that carry across state lines. And because of this bill, we're also expanding housing assistance so that no woman has to choose between a violent home and no home at all. That's what today is all about."*

*"Today is about all the law enforcement officials -- like Police Chief Jim Johnson ---- they're the first to respond when a victim calls for help. And because of this bill, we're continuing all the training and support that's proven so effective in bridging some gaps that were in actual enforcement of the law so that we can actually bring more offenders to justice. And we're giving our law enforcement better tools to investigate cases of rape, which remains a consistently underreported crime in our country. Helping police officers deliver on the most important part of their job -- preventing harm and saving lives -- that's what today is all about."*

## **APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE – THE SEQUESTER, CONTINUING RESOLUTION AND A POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

The long dreaded sequester -- the across-the-board cuts that every political leader spent all last year assuring the public would never be implemented -- went into effect last Friday, March 1. It now appears that some form of the cuts will remain in place for the rest of Fiscal Year 2013.

First some background. The federal fiscal year starts on October 1. Congress failed to pass any of the appropriations bills that fund the government for Fiscal Year 2013 before that date. To keep the government operating, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution funding the government for six months and ending on March 27. The Continuing Resolution allows the agencies to operate the programs at roughly their Fiscal Year 2012 levels (there were a few exceptions written into the resolution). Another bill to fund the government for the last six months of the fiscal year needs to pass before the 27th of this month or the government will shut down.

Also, in a separate but related fiscal bill, the sequester was created. In 2011, when Congress and the President were working on legislation to raise the debt ceiling, a deficit reduction compromise was reached. The bill raised the debt ceiling, but also made a commitment to cut the deficit. The bill created a "super committee" charged with developing a long term deficit reduction plan. If that committee failed to reach a consensus, the law required the imposition of across-the-board cuts starting on January 1, 2013. The super committee failed to reach an agreement. For over a year everyone has known the cuts would start on January 1, 2013. Every political leader, from the President, to the Speaker, to the Senate Majority Leader, said that they opposed the across-the-board cuts and would find a way to pass legislation to

avoid them. And, as part of the tax bill passed at the end of the last Congress, they did find a way to delay the start of the cuts until March 1.

Unfortunately, they were unable to find a way to solve the problem for the rest of the year. The President wanted to pass a bill that both cut spending and raised taxes. The House Republicans opposed raising taxes and wanted to pass legislation that only included spending cuts. Neither side would budge, and March 1 arrived.

The cuts are called a sequester. By law a total of \$85 billion needs to be cut for Fiscal Year 2013. To reach that goal, almost every domestic spending program must be cut by 5%. (There are some exceptions for programs like food stamps and Pell grants). Medicare must be cut by 2%. Defense programs will be cut by almost 8%.

So at this point, the federal government is running under a Continuing Resolution, which funds programs at Fiscal Year 2012 levels, further reduced by the sequester cuts. The cuts are imposed on every account in a flat, across-the-board fashion.

Most political leaders are very concerned about the impact of the cuts. They just cannot agree on a way to make them go away.

And, as discussed above, in three weeks, the government will shut down unless another Continuing Resolution or budget bill is passed.

On Wednesday, the House passed H.R. 933. That bill would fund the government for the rest of the year. The bill assumes that the \$85 billion in overall savings remain in place, but allows the Defense Department, the Department of Veterans Affairs and a few other agencies to move money around. In other words, the cuts would not be imposed in an across-the-board way. Instead the agency heads would have the flexibility to adjust the spending within accounts as long as the overall totals stayed the same. The vote on the bill was 267-151.

The bill now goes to the Senate. The Senate leadership would like to add to the spending totals in the House bill, and perhaps add some tax increases. But the House would never agree to such a bill. Instead the Senate will probably give domestic agencies the ability to move funds like the House gave Defense and VA. But they will not add to the overall total spending levels in the bill.

No one wants a government shutdown. The President has indicated that he will sign the bill when it gets passed.

The bottom line is, that unless things change dramatically, the next budget bill will have the \$85 billion in cuts, only not applied across-the-board. Many Democrats believe that as the cuts take effect, the public will demand relief and later this year the Republicans will agree to another budget bill that restores some of the funds. Republicans say that will not happen.

It all depends on how the public will react when all the cuts are in place. *(As provided by the Akerman Senterfitt Federal Lobbying Team)*

**SEN. NELSON TAKES TO THE SENATE FLOOR TO DISCUSS THE SEQUESTER**

Here is an excerpt of Senator Nelson's remarks on the floor of the Senate discussing the sequester and the cuts to Customs and Board Protection at airports like Miami International Airport.

*"Mr. President, I, like many of our colleagues, have just flown on our nation's airways going through a fairly crowded airport in Florida, coming into a crowded airport here in Washington. And in 30 days, those T.S.A. lines are going to get longer. For the international flights that I and others have worked very hard to get additional customs agents to cut the time. Having to process our international visitors, and in airports like Miami, Orlando, where there's quite a bit of international traffic, getting those additional customs folks has meant a great deal because we even had some – some airlines that would come in, for example, to Orlando and they'd have to keep the international passengers on the airplane for upwards of an hour before they could get off the airplane so that there was room with the people, personnel available. You see where I'm going. Because all of that's going to change. Unless, as the good book says, come, let us reason together. Unless our sharply divided politics, be it partisan, be it ideological, unless we can come together and reach consensus to stop this ridiculous thing that went into effect last Friday, ridiculous, called the sequester, which was never intended to go into effect but because of the inability of the parties to come together, in fact, it is in effect and it is cutting in an indiscriminate way like a meat cleaver across the board, and in certain agencies it even gets exacerbated like the Department of Transportation because the cuts can only occur in certain accounts, and thus the civilian employees that are going to be furloughed."*

## **OPA-LOCKA AIRPORT AT-RISK OF CLOSURE DUE TO SEQUESTER**

The Miami-Dade Aviation Department and OIA have reached out to the county's House and Senate congressional delegation members to express concern over the potential closure of the Opa-Locka Airport (OPF) due to FAA budgets cuts which are mandated by the sequester. OPF is owned by the County and Aviation Department and serves as an important reliever to MIA. Per the across-the-board cuts required under sequestration, the FAA will begin closing 238 contract control towers throughout the country after April 1, including a handful in Florida - among them the OPF control tower.

The airport houses maintenance facilities for large commercial aircraft that cannot be accommodated at MIA and is home to the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Miami, known as the world's busiest air sea rescue base. The control tower is essential for OPF to continue to fulfill its role as a reliever to MIA.

## **FILIBUSTER AND THEN BRENNAN CONFIRMATION**

In a scene right out of the Jimmy Stewart classic film, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Kentucky Senator Rand Paul filibustered the confirmation vote of John Brennan as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency for just under 13 hours.

The Senator cited the Obama administration's policy on unmanned drones and the targeting of Americans suspected to be terrorists. The Senator repeatedly asked Attorney General about this use of force against Americans and Mr. Holder responded with the following letter.

*Dear Senator Paul,*

*It has come to my attention that you have now asked an additional question: "Does the President have the authority to use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil?" The answer to that question is no.*

*Sincerely,  
Eric H. Holder, Jr.*

Following the filibuster, Brennan was confirmed by a vote of 63-34. He will replace retired Gen. David Petraeus and acting CIA Director Michael Morell. Brennan was previously Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama.

## **MULTIMODAL OPPORTUNITIES VIA ENHANCED (MOVE) FREIGHT ACT OF 2013**

Congresswoman Corrine Brown (FL) has joined Representative Albio Sires of New Jersey and Adam Smith (WA), Earl Blumenauer (OR), Janice Hahn (CA), and Grace Napolitano (CA) in urging their fellow members to cosponsor the MOVE (Multimodal Opportunities via Enhanced) Freight Act of 2013.

The bill expands on the successful creation of a national freight policy in the long term transportation bill, MAP-21, to ensure the various and essential modes of our freight network are accounted for. The cosponsors believe that a national freight network must support a broad range of transportation infrastructure, including highways, railways, navigable waterways, seaports, airports, freight intermodal connectors, and aerotropolis transportation systems.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has estimated freight is forecasted to grow, with indicators showing that United States shipments will more than double between 2010 and 2040 to roughly \$39.5 trillion annually, with an estimated \$10.3 trillion worth of goods using multiple modes of transportation each year.

In an effort to ensure that the nation's transportation system is able to support our global economic competitiveness policy, the MOVE Freight Act will implement the following:

- **Inclusion of Multimodal Transportation Infrastructure in the National Freight Network:** The National Freight Policy established by MAP-21 charges the Department of Transportation with the creation of a National Freight Network that will feature 27,000 centerline miles of roadways that are most essential to freight movement, and will serve as a target for state investment. The MOVE Freight Act will broaden the definition of the National Freight Network to include freight rail, which carries a significant portion of our nation's freight, navigable waterways, inland ports, seaports, freight intermodal connectors, airports, and aerotropolis transportation systems.
- **Requirement that States Create State Freight Plans:** Map-21 encourages states to form Freight Advisory Committees to provide input on freight issues and to aid in the development of state freight plans. We believe that the creation of state freight plans is critical to the development of a well informed and effective national freight

policy. These plans will also help states to determine where their money can be best spent to increase the efficiency of freight movement

- **National Freight Infrastructure Investment Grants:** This section would establish a competitive grant program to provide financial assistance for capital investments in freight transportation infrastructure to States, political subdivision of States, government-sponsored authorities and corporations, and the District of Columbia. The language is identical to the Grants portion of The FREIGHT Act (H.R.1338), introduced in the 111th and 112th Congress.

## **PRESIDENT OBAMA NOMINATES THREE MORE TO CABINET**

This week President Obama made several nominations to his cabinet. They include; the Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. The President's cabinet has changed significantly since his reelection with several new appointees.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the president of the Walmart Foundation, was become the new director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Ernest J. Moniz, the director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Energy Initiative, will replace Secretary Steven Chu at the Department of Energy.

Gina McCarthy, the assistant administrator in charge of air and radiation at the Environmental Protection Agency, will replace the departing administrator, Lisa Jackson.

## **REPS. STATEMENT ON DEATH OF HUGO CHAVEZ**

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart released the following statement in response to the death of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez.

*"For more than a decade, the Venezuelan people have suffered under the authoritarian rule of Hugo Chavez. He cracked down on freedom of the press and arrested judges and opposition leaders who didn't agree with him. Additionally, he used petro dollars stolen from the Venezuelan people to extend his influence and fund the sinister agendas of cruel dictators like Castro, Ahmadinejad, and Assad.*

*"Now, there is hope for the restoration of freedom in Venezuela with truly free and fair elections, renewal of a civil society, and the protection of an independent press. I share the hopes of South Florida's patriotic Venezuelan community that today will mark a new era and the start of a brighter future for their beloved country."*

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen issued the below statement as well.

*"According to news reports, Chavez has passed after a long battle against cancer. For over a decade Chavez had used corruption, intimidation, manipulation, and brutal tactics to rule over the Venezuelan people. Chavez misruled Venezuela with an iron grip on the government, economy, and the courts as he routinely bullied the media and the opposition to deny the people of Venezuela their basic freedoms. Today, his death*

*marks the end of this tyrannical rule but the road to democracy for the Venezuelan people is still very much uncertain.*

*Chavez not only led Venezuela into a spiraling economic downturn, but also deepened ties with fellow despots throughout the world that led to fear and instability in the Western Hemisphere. His ever growing cooperation with fellow state sponsors of terrorism, Iran, Syria, and Cuba, threatened U.S. interests in the region and around the globe. By providing aid and financial assistance to these rogue regimes, Chavez gave many human rights violators an economic lifeline in the form of oil subsidies to continue their tyrannical rule over their people.*

*The Venezuela people now have an opportunity to emerge from this oppressive regime and regain their democracy and human rights. However, this can only be done through a true democratic process with free, fair, and transparent elections. I am hopeful that democracy will rise from the ashes of the Chavez regime and again become a part of a new Venezuela. Now it is up to the Venezuelan people to redefine and rebuild their nation as a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous state free of the clutches of Chavez and his disastrous social and economic policies.”*

## **REPS. WILSON & MICA HOLD HEARING ON DYER FEDERAL BUILDING IN MIAMI**

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson was joined on Friday by Chairman John Mica of the Subcommittee on Governmental Operations, Congressman, the president of Miami-Dade College, Dr. Eduardo Padron, and representatives of the General Services Administration and Government Accountability Office at Miami Dade College. They were there to discuss ways to reduce government waste and inefficiency related to underused or vacant federal buildings. In particular, the hearing will focus on the David W. Dyer Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Miami-Dade County.

This Congressional hearing is the second in a series of hearings on problems in the management of federal property. While Congress rarely holds hearings outside of Washington, DC, highly-publicized issues related to the Dyer Federal Building made Miami-Dade County an appropriate location for the fact-finding session. Miami Dade College has been attempting to acquire the vacant courthouse since 2008.

*“By ensuring the efficient use of federal buildings, we can save taxpayers money and create lasting economic engines for our communities,”* said Congresswoman Wilson.

*It’s my hope that this hearing will prompt such positive change right here in South Florida. Miami Dade College should be free to acquire the vacant Dyer Courthouse immediately. This action would be a win for taxpayers, the college, and our community.”*

## **REPS. JOE GARCIA AND JOAQUIN CASTRO CO-HOST IMMIGRATION FORUM**

Reps. Joe Garcia and Joaquin Castro of Texas co-hosted a forum to discuss immigration reform policy on Friday afternoon. Joining the Congressmen were community leaders. The event was held at the Miami Dade College Kendall Campus.

## LOOKING AHEAD

*The week of March 11 – March 15...and beyond:*

- The House will be in session next week.
- The Senate will be in session next week.

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## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

**MARCH 18 – MARCH 22, 2013**

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### **POTUS IN MIAMI ON FRIDAY – WILL TOUT PORTMIAMI TUNNEL PROJECT AS A NATIONAL MODEL**

President Obama is scheduled to be in Miami on Friday. The purpose of the visit will be to highlight the Administration's ongoing efforts to encourage greater partnership among federal, state/local, and private sector actors to rebuild U.S. infrastructure assets.

While details for the event are still being worked out (and weather permitting), the event is scheduled to take place at PortMiami on Friday afternoon. The President is scheduled to arrive at Miami International Airport around 12:15PM.

The President will tour the PortMiami tunnel project, which has utilized both public and private resources (the tunnel project is an internationally renowned public-private partnership “PPP” or “P3”), as exemplary of the economic policies initially rolled out in the President’s State of the Union address in February. The President will give brief remarks on the project and the need for additional infrastructure investment and PPPs, following a brief tour of the tunnel.

The \$1.1 billion tunnel project leverages a federally-backed \$341 million loan via the U.S. Department of Transportation’s – Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, and will improve access to and from the Port, serving as a dedicated roadway connector linking the Port with the MacArthur Causeway (State Road A1A - which connects Miami to Miami Beach) and I-395 on the mainland. At present, the Port is linked to the mainland only by the Port Bridge. The tunnel will improve access to the Port, thus helping to keep it competitive and efficient, improve traffic safety in downtown Miami by removing cargo trucks and cruise line buses from congested city streets, and facilitate ongoing and future development plans in and around downtown Miami. PortMiami provides 176,000 jobs, \$6.4 billion in wages and \$17 billion in economic output.

### **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENTS IN DC THIS WEEK**

This week four Miami-Dade County departments were in Washington this week. Public Housing and Community Development, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, the Aviation Department and PortMiami were each in town for their annual conferences

and/or official business. OIA set up meetings and joined the departments on visits with the entire Miami-Dade County congressional delegation and congressional committee staff. Additionally, OIA represented Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces in a meeting at the White House with Mr. Jay Williams, former Mayor of Youngstown, OH and the current Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for President Obama.

## **CONGRESS PASSES CONTINUING RESOLUTION – ANOTHER SHUTDOWN AVERTED**

On Thursday, the House passed the Senate's version of the Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government through September 30, 2013, clearing it for the President's signature. He has 10 days to sign the bill, so his international trip may continue as planned.

The House adopted the Senate-passed substitute by a vote of 318 – 109. Most of the government is funded through a continuation of the existing CR, while complete appropriations bills are included for Agriculture; Commerce/Justice/Science; Defense; Homeland Security; and Military Construction/VA. The spending allocations for these five bills have been shifted to preserve priority programs in light of the sequester.

The bill maintains the across-the-board cuts necessitated by the March 1st sequestration with a 7.8 percent reduction for most defense programs and 5 percent reduction for most non-defense discretionary spending, bringing the decrease in total FY 2013 discretionary funding to \$984 billion.

## **UASI AMENDMENT DEFEATED**

There was a list of 100 proposed amendments Senate lawmakers had filed to the Continuing Resolution. Among those was one filed by Senator Tom Coburn that would have prohibited UASI funds from being used for overtime, spring training, computers, and other related issues. The amendment needed 60 votes for passage. OIA, working with the county's partners at NACo, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the D.C. Office of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, lobbied for the defeat of the amendment. As a result, the amendment failed to garner the necessary votes for passage. Senator Nelson opposed it, while Senator Rubio voted in favor of it.

*(Information provided by OIA, Greenberg Traurig and Akerman Senterfitt Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **OPA-LOCKA AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER TO REMAIN OPEN - EXEMPTED FROM FAA CLOSURE**

In early March, FAA proposed to close 189 contract air traffic control towers, including Opa-Locka Executive Airport (OPF, which is owned by the County and Aviation Department and serves as an important reliever to MIA), as part of its plan to meet the \$637 million in cuts required under budget sequestration.

Shortly after the announcement, Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) and OIA reached out to the county's House and Senate congressional delegation members to express their concerns about the planned closure and its impact on the region, citing the fact that OPF houses maintenance facilities for large commercial aircraft that cannot be accommodated at MIA, serves as an essential reliever to MIA, is home to the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Miami (known as the world's busiest air sea rescue base) and acts as a base of operations for Southern Command activities. .

FAA stated that it would consider keeping open towers if doing so would be in the national interest. MDAD Director Jose Abreu sent a letter to the FAA requesting that OPF be exempted from the scheduled closures and last week South Florida Reps. Wilson, Wasserman Schultz, Diaz-Balart and Hastings sent letters to the FAA Administrator requesting exemptions to keep OPF open. Additionally, MDAD and OIA has asked Senators Nelson and Rubio to support Senator Moran's (VA) amendment to the Continuing Resolution, which would also address the issue and exempt FAA contract control towers from being shuttered.

On Friday it was announced that OPF would be one of four Florida contract air traffic control towers to receive an exemption and remain open.

## **WRDA BILL CLEARS SENATE COMMITTEE – LEGISLATION INCLUDES WATER INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING PILOT PROGRAM**

Below is a summary from yesterday's Senate Environment and Public Works Committee markup of the 2013 WRDA bill. The bill easily passed out of the Committee with only a few amendments which are detailed here. We expect to see the Senate take up the bill in the next couple of months.

### **Overview and Main Highlights**

On Wednesday, March 20, 2013 the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) marked-up and passed out of Committee the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2013 (S.601). EPW Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) reported that Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) is committed to moving WRDA legislation to the floor and wants to do so quickly, and that Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is also supportive of moving the legislation forward.

The bill was passed on a unanimous vote after the adoption of a Manager's Amendment making several technical changes, as well as the adoption of nine amendments en bloc that were addressed to very particular state specific issues. Members did not offer additional amendments as Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member David Vitter (R-LA) pledged to work with Members going forward to address remaining concerns, and indicated that they would oppose any further amendments during the markup.

After praising the bi-partisan cooperation that went into the bill, which was a recurrent theme throughout the markup, Chairman Boxer summarized the highlights of the legislation as:

- Reforming the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) project approval and delivery processes, including (1) reforms to accelerate project approvals by setting deadlines in the review and permitting process; and (2) the creation of pilot programs for non-federal sponsors to implement studies and projects as opposed to direct implementation by the ACOE.
- Establishing a framework to authorize projects for construction that have a completed Chief's Report as of the date of enactment, and to increase the authorized cost for previously authorized projects, while complying with the earmark ban.
- Reauthorizing and improving the levee safety program.
- Ensuring that funds deposited into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) are used for harbor maintenance and dredging.
- Creating a commission to de-authorize outdated projects.
- Creating a new title on "Extreme Weather" intended to study and identify strategies to reduce risk to human life and property resulting from extreme weather events.
- Authorizing a new innovative financing program – the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) – modeled on TIFIA, the successful transportation loan program.
- Ranking Member Vitter also remarked on the strong bi-partisan tradition on the infrastructure side of EPW's jurisdiction and focused on many of the same highlights as Chairman Boxer, including:
  - Establishing a framework to authorize projects and studies without earmarks.
  - Making significant ACOE process and implementation reforms, many building on the project delivery reforms included in the recent transportation bill, MAP-21.
  - Increasing accountability by including monetary penalties for missing deadlines in the review and permitting process, but ensuring that those funds are used to help advance the project.
  - Reforming the HMTF so that money intended for dredging is used for dredging.

Ranking Member Vitter also noted that they are still working on reforms to the Inland Waterways Trust Fund and that he expected to add those provisions before moving the bill to the floor.

After these remarks by the Chairman and Ranking Member, the Committee voted on the amendments and the overall bill, reporting S.601 favorably to the Senate. Individual senators then made remarks.

*(As provided by Patton Boggs Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **OBAMA ADMINISTRATION COMMITTED TO FAST-TRACK TRADE AUTHORITY**

This week the Obama administration renewed its commitment to seek a fast-track trade authority from Congress. Members of the Senate indicated they would like to move forward quickly on a measure that would approve new trade agreements.

Ambassador Demetrios Marantis, Acting United States Trade Representative recently told a Senate committee that the administration will pursue the trade authority with Congress as it presses negotiations toward the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a new trade pact with Europe.

According to fast-track rules, a trade deal must receive an up-or-down vote in Congress, without amendment, within 90 days of being submitted by the White House. Congress has never rejected a trade agreement submitted under those procedures *(as reported by CQ)*.

## **TAMIAMI TRAIL BRIDGE OPENS IN EVERGLADES – FUNDS SECURED BY CONGRESS (REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ PRESS RELEASE)**

On Tuesday, officials in South Florida celebrated the grand opening of the one-mile Tamiami Trail Bridge. This milestone Everglades restoration effort is the largest construction project in the history of the National Park Service.

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz was integral in securing the necessary federal funding for the project, which will begin to restore natural water flows through the Everglades ecosystem by eliminating one-mile of the 10.7-mile-long barrier the Tamiami roadway presents to water flow south into Everglades National Park. Increased water volume and flow under the bridge will help re-establish seasonal water depths and flooding durations that are critical to the survival of many of the fish and wildlife species and stem saltwater intrusion into the Everglades south of Tamiami Trail.

*“Since 2008 we’ve seen a dramatic increase in federal resources as well as the commencement of several major federal projects – from completing the Tamiami Trail bridge and opening it today, to improving the ecosystem at Picayune Strand and the Indian River Lagoon,” said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. “This one-mile*

*bridge is just the beginning. We must begin the next phase of this effort and I will fight for the funding to begin the additional 5.5 miles of bridging on the Tamiami Trail called for by federal managers. Today's progress is great news for America's Everglades and shows how committed President Obama's administration is to Everglades restoration. It is important that Congress maintain the momentum of the last few years by fully funding the restoration priorities.*

*"Restoring our Everglades has significant environmental and economic benefits for Florida. In addition to the seven million Floridians who rely on the Everglades for their primary source of drinking water, a 2010 study conducted for the Everglades Foundation showed that for every dollar invested in Everglades restoration, \$4 are generated in economic benefits. Restoration projects launched by the Administration already have generated 6,600 jobs and are expected to generate more. An \$11.5 billion investment in Everglades restoration would result in \$46.5 billion in gains to Florida's economy and create more than 440,000 jobs over the next 50 years, by spurring construction and tourism activity.*

*"We are fortunate to have one of the world's great wonders right here in South Florida, and restoring the Everglades serves as a reminder that we must leave this world better than we found it so that future generations can enjoy it too."*

## **REP. ROS-LEHTINEN RELEASES STATEMENT ON LEGISLATION TO LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON CUBA**

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, made the following statement in regards to recent efforts by lawmakers to introduce legislation calling for an end to the U.S. embargo on Cuba and lifting travel restrictions. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

*"Once again, we see the same group of lawmakers seeking to eliminate U.S. restrictions on the Castro regime by offering legislation that is not only misguided, but reckless and dangerous. I'll continue to oppose these bills because they do nothing to further the freedom and human rights of the Cuban people, but rather serve to solidify the murderous regime's stranglehold over the island and attempt to provide an economic lifeline to the Castro brothers.*

*"These latest efforts by Castro apologists are a sober reminder that there are those in Congress who refuse to see the obvious – that 50 plus years later, the Castro dictatorship has no intention of letting up its iron grip over the Cuban people. Just this week, Castro's state security agents surrounded and stoned the home of a leader of the Ladies in White and caused many women to have to be hospitalized due to their injuries. The regime will continue to hide behind so-called reforms in an effort to distract the attention from its atrocious and systematic violation of real basic freedoms and human rights.*

*"It's appalling that some lawmakers continue to offer legislation that seeks to help the dictatorship in Cuba and ignores the continuing gross human rights abuses in Cuba. Now more than ever, we must stand in solidarity with the freedom-hungry people of Cuba, and I am confident that my colleagues in Congress who support the Cuban people's struggle for democracy and freedom will remain united in its opposition to the Castro regime and these ludicrous legislative proposals."*

## **REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ TRAVELS TO ISRAEL WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA**

Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz traveled with President Obama to Israel Tuesday night.

*"It is an honor to be in Israel with President Obama for the first foreign trip of his second term as he visits Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan," said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. "This trip is an important opportunity for President Obama to meet with the new Israeli government on a broad range of issues on which the United States and Israel cooperate."*

*"As an American Jew and Member of Congress, I am proud that our President has prioritized the region and the U.S.-Israel relationship, continuing to strengthen our diplomatic and security ties. With so much going on in the region, this trip is significant for many reasons, as the President will spend time with the people of Israel, discuss our shared concerns, and reaffirm the deep bond that exists between our two countries."*

President Obama is only the fifth President to visit Israel since the nation's founding 65 years ago. This is Obama's third trip to Israel, but his first as President.

## **REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION ON BREAST CANCER**

This week, Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz hosted and was joined by expert researchers and advocates to discuss the progress made researching breast cancer over the past three years and learn more about the path forward. The timing of the panel is fitting, as it is Women's History Month and just days before the third anniversary of the Affordable Care Act being signed into law. Seven of the eight panelists are breast cancer survivors.

After battling breast cancer at 41 years old, Rep. Wasserman Schultz wanted to do something to help educate other young women about the importance of knowing the risks and warning signs. In March of 2009, she introduced the Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young Act, or EARLY Act, and it became law as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in March 2010.

## **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY HOSTING TREE SUMMIT AT FIU**

On Wednesday, the county and FIU are hosting the 7th Annual Tree Summit, which brings together local elected officials, government agencies, industry professionals and non-profit organizations who share the common goal of increasing Miami-Dade's tree canopy coverage to 30% by the year 2020.

The 2013 Tree Summit, titled "*The Jobs are in the Trees*," will feature discussions by experts in the fields of landscape architecture, engineering, arboriculture, urban planning and the importance of trees in creating healthier and livable communities. Admission is open to the public. The event is from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at FIU's Modesto Maidique Campus, 11299 SW Eighth St.

To register online visit: [www.milliontrees.miamidade.gov](http://www.milliontrees.miamidade.gov) (As reported in the *Miami Herald*, 03/26/2013)

## **LOOKING AHEAD – TWO WEEK RECESS THEN CONGRESS TURNS TO BIG TICKET ITEMS, INCLUDING GUN CONTROL AND IMMIGRATION REFORM**

The Senate will turn to the issue of gun violence prevention after the two-week Congressional recess. Last Thursday, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid introduced a new gun control measure that includes language to expand background checks. The plan would also expand sanctions on illegal transfers of firearms and beef up school safety. It does not include an assault weapons ban, but Sen. Reid has said he will allow votes on amendments that would limit high-capacity magazines and assault weapons when the Senate takes it up next month.

Bipartisan and bicameral negotiations on comprehensive immigration reform inched forward this past week as members and their staffs hammered out details of potential legislation that could head to the House and Senate floors (after Committee consideration) in early May or shortly thereafter.

*The week of March 25 – March 29...and beyond:*

- The House will not be in session this week.
- The Senate will not be in session this week.
- The President will be in Miami on Friday.
- Congress will be out of session March 25 – April 5.
- ***It's March Madness we're all about "the U" – GO CANES!!!***

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