WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT
MARCH 3 – MARCH 7, 2014

(The following is an overview of D.C. activities concerning Miami-Dade County, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, the County's Congressional Delegation & the Administration)

THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION

THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION

PRESIDENT OBAMA VISITS MIAMI TO DISCUSS EDUCATION ISSUES

Remarks by the President on Preparing for College

Coral Reef Senior High School
Miami, Florida

3:05 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, Miami! (Applause.) Hello, Cuda Nation! (Applause.) Hello! It is good to be here at Coral Reef Senior High. (Applause.) You guys are just happy because it's warm down here all the time. (Laughter.) I don't know if you're aware of this, but the rest of the country is cold. (Laughter.) Listen, Michelle and I are so grateful for the warm welcome. It is great to be here. I want to thank some people who are doing outstanding work.

First of all, your superintendent, Superintendent Carvalho, is doing great work. We're really proud of him. (Applause.) Your principal, Principal Leal, is doing great work. (Applause.) All the Coral Reef teachers and staff, you guys are all doing a great job. (Applause.) And you're doing what is necessary to help young people get ready for college and careers. So that's why we're here. We are proud of what's being done at this school.

I want to mention a few other folks who are here who are fighting on behalf of the people of South Florida every day. We've got Congressman Joe Garcia is here. (Applause.) We've got Congresswoman Frederica Wilson here. (Applause.) We've got Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez. Your former Governor Charlie Crist is here. (Applause.)

And most of all, I want to thank the people that Michelle and I came all the down here to see, and that is the students of Coral Reef. (Applause.) We had heard great things about your school. We had heard great things about the students. We wanted to come down here and just see what was going on. (Applause.) And Michelle and I just had a chance to visit with some of your classmates who are going through some of the scholarship applications, and we had a chance to talk to them and hear what their plans

were. And first of all, Michelle and I looked and we said, these must be actors playing students, because they were all smart and good-looking and organized. (Laughter.) And I asked them, what are you going to do? And they're -- well, I'm going to be applying to business school, and then I'm going to start a company, and then I -- when I was your age, I didn't know what I was doing. I was lucky if I had gotten out of bed on time. (Laughter.) So you guys are ahead of the game.

And we're here to tell you that you've got to keep up the good work, because by working hard every single day, every single night, you are making the best investment there is in your future. And we want to make sure you've got everything, all the tools you need to succeed. We want every young person to have the kinds of teachers and the kind of classes and the kind of learning experiences that are available to you here at Coral Reef. (Applause.) Because that's the best investment we can make in America's future. (Applause.)

Now, keep in mind, Michelle and I, we're only here today because of the kind of education that we got. That was our ticket to success. We grew up a lot like many of you. I was raised by a single mom; she was a teenager when I was born. We moved around a lot, we did not have a lot of money, but the one thing she was determined to see was that my sister and I would get the best education possible.

And she would press me. Sometimes she'd make me wake up, do my lessons before I even went to school. She was not going to let me off the hook. And at the time, I wasn't happy about it, but now I'm glad she pressed me like that. Because, thanks to my mother and my grandparents, and then great teachers and great counselors who encouraged me, and a country that made it possible for me to afford a higher education, I was able to go to college and law school.

And then when I met Michelle, I saw that -- (applause) --there were a couple of things I noticed. I noticed she was smart. (Applause.) I noticed she was funny -- she's funny, she's funnier than I am. (Laughter.) Obviously, I noticed she was cute, yes. (Applause.) But one of the things I also realized was, even though we had grown up in very different places, her story was a lot like mine. Her dad worked at a city water plant. He didn't go to college. He was a blue-collar worker. Michelle's mom -- my mother-in-law, who I love to death -- she was a secretary. No one in her family had gone to college. But because she had worked hard and her parents understood the value of education, and she had great teachers and great opportunities, and because the country was willing to invest to make sure that she was able to pay for college, she ended up going to some of the best universities in the country. (Applause.)

So the point is she and I have been able to achieve things that our parents, our grandparents would have never dreamed of. And that's the chance this country should give every young person. That's the idea at the heart of America. (Applause.)

What makes this country great, what makes it special when you look around, and Miami is a great example of it, you've got people coming from everywhere, every background, every race, every faith. But what binds us together is this idea that if you work hard, you

can make it -- that there's opportunity for all. The belief that no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter what your last name is, if you are responsible and put in the effort, you can succeed. There's no limit to what you can do. That's what America is all about. (Applause.)

Opportunity is what drew many of your parents and grandparents to America. And we've got to restore that idea for your generation, so that everybody has the same chance Michelle and I did. That's why we're working on what we call an opportunity agenda to create more jobs and train more workers with new skills; to make sure hard work is rewarded with a paycheck that supports a family; to make sure that everybody can get health care when they need it, so that nobody has to get into financial trouble because somebody in the family gets sick. (Applause.)

And for the students here, a lot of you, you may not think about these issues all the time. You're spending a lot of time on homework and sports, and this and that. But you also oftentimes see your own family struggling and you worry about it. And one of the single-most important parts of our opportunity agenda is making sure that every young person in America has access to a world-class education -- a world-class education. (Applause.) So that's why we are here.

I believe we should start teaching our kids at the earliest ages. So we're trying to help more states make high-quality preschool and other early learning programs available to the youngest kids. (Applause.) I believe that our K-12 system should be the best in the world. So we started a competition called Race to the Top, to encourage more states like Florida to raise expectations for students like you, because when we set high expectations, every single one of you can meet them. (Applause.) You're recruiting and preparing the best teachers. You are turning around low-performing schools. You're expanding high-performing ones. You're making sure every student is prepared for college or a career.

I believe that every student should have the best technology. So we launched something we called ConnectED to connect our schools to high-speed Internet. And I want to congratulate Miami-Dade and your superintendent, because you have achieved your goal of installing wi-fi in every single one of your schools. (Applause.)

So the good news is, in part because of some of these reforms we've initiated, when you add it all up our nation's high school graduation rate is the highest on record. The drop-out rate has been dropping, and among Latino students has been cut in half since 2000. (Applause.) Miami-Dade's graduation rate is higher than it's ever been. That's all because of the efforts of so many people, including the parents and students who have been putting in the effort. It's because of the teachers and administrators and staff who are doing such a great job. You should be proud. We're making progress -- we're making progress. (Applause.)

Yes, you guys -- by the way, you can all sit down. I didn't realize everybody was still standing up. Sit down. Take a load off. You guys can't sit down though, because you don't have chairs, although bend your knees so you don't faint. (Laughter.)

But here's the key thing, Coral Reef: We still have more work to do, all of us -- elected officials, principals, teachers, parents, students. Because, as Michelle says, education is a two-way street. Folks like us have to work hard to give you the best schools and support that you need. But then, you've got to hold up your end of the bargain by committing to your education. That means you've got to stretch your minds. You've got to push through subjects that aren't always easy. And it means continuing your education past high school, whether that's a two-year or a four-year college degree or getting some professional training.

So I want to talk about an easy step that high school students like you can take to make college a reality. And it's something you already know here at Coral Reef, but I'm speaking to all the young people out there who may be watching. It's called FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

It is a simple form. It used to be complicated; we made it simple. It doesn't cost anything -- that's why the word "free" is right there in the name. (Laughter.) It does not take a long time to fill out. Once you do, you're putting yourself in the running for all kinds of financial support for college -- scholarships, grants, loans, work-study jobs.

For the past five years, we've been working to make college more affordable. We took on a college loan system that gave billions of dollars of taxpayer money to big banks to manage the student loan system. We said, we don't need the banks, let's give the money directly to students, we can help more students. (Applause.) We can help more students that way. So we expanded the grants that help millions of students from low-income backgrounds pay for college. We're offering millions of people the chance to cap their student loan payments at 10 percent of their incomes once they graduate.

Today, more young people are earning college degrees than ever before. That's a great thing. (Applause.) That is a great thing. But we still need to do more to help rein in the rising cost of tuition. We need to do more to help Americans who feel trapped by student loan debt -- because no striving, hardworking, ambitious, young American should ever be denied a college education just because they can't afford it -- nobody. (Applause.)

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of young people all across the country who say the cost of college is holding them back. Some of you may have sat around the kitchen table with your parents wondering about whether you'll be able to afford it. So FAFSA is by far the easiest way to answer that question. And I know the Barracudas know all about FAFSA. (Applause.) Last year, you had the second-highest completion rate of any large high school in the state. (Applause.) You should be proud of that. Your teachers and parents should be proud of that.

But last year, almost half of high school graduates in Florida didn't fill out the FAFSA form.

THE PRESIDENT: That ain't right. (Laughter.) Not only is it not right, but it also ain't right. (Laughter.) And as a result, they lost out on over $100 million in Pell grants. Think about that -- $100 million that could have helped Florida students help pay for college was just left on the table. That's just in Florida. Nationwide, over one million high school students did not fill out the FAFSA form. That happens every year.

So my challenge today to every high school student in America: Fill out the form. Even if you think you might not qualify for financial aid, fill out the form. You might qualify.

And we're making it easier than ever. We put the FAFSA form online. We made it shorter. It takes about half an hour to fill out. And it could change the rest of your life. We've updated it to save your parents a lot of hassle as well. And today, I'm announcing another improvement.

Today, I'm directing the Department of Education to tell every governor that, starting today, they can, if they choose, confidentially let high school administrators know which students have filled out the FAFSA form and which haven't. So that way, if Principal Leal wants to check in with the seniors --

THE PRESIDENT: I know, everybody is like, wow. (Laughter.) I know she's already on top of stuff, but this way, she could check and seniors who had not filled it out, she could then help them answer the questions and figure out what's holding her back -- what's holding them back.

Anybody will be able to go online and find out the number of students who have filled out the form at each high school, so we can track it. So if you want to have a friendly competition with Palmetto High or Miami Killian -- (applause) -- to see who can get a higher completion rate on your FAFSA, you can do that. (Applause.) You achieved the second-highest rate in the state, but I mean if you want to settle for number two, that's okay -- you might be able to get number one. (Applause.) Huh? I'm just saying you could go for number one. (Applause.)

So these are things I can do on my own, but I'm here to also tell you I need -- I could use some help from folks in Washington. There are some things I don't need Congress's permission for, and in this year of action, whenever I see a way to act to help expand opportunity for young people I'm just going to go ahead and take it. I'm just going to go ahead and do it. (Applause.)

So earlier this year, Michelle and I hosted a College Opportunity Summit, where over 150 colleges and universities and nonprofits made commitments to help more low-income students get to college and graduate from college. (Applause.) But I'm also willing to work with anybody in Congress -- Democrat, Republican, don't matter -- to make sure young people like you have a shot to success.

So a few days ago, I sent my budget to Congress. And budgets are pretty boring -- but the stuff inside the budgets are pretty important. And my budget focuses on things like preschool for all; like redesigning high schools so students like you can learn real-world

skills that businesses want -- (applause) -- like preparing more young people for careers in some of the fields of the future -- in science and technology and engineering and math to discover new planets and invent robots and cure diseases -- all the cool stuff that we adults haven't figured out yet. (Laughter.)

These are not just the right investments for our schools; they're the right priorities for our country. You are our priority. We've got to make sure we have budgets that reflect that you are the most important thing to this country's success. If you don't succeed, we don't succeed. (Applause.)

We've got to make sure all of you are prepared for the new century, and we've got to keep growing our economy in other ways: attracting new high-tech jobs, reforming our immigration system -- something Congressman Garcia is fighting for. (Applause.) And the rest of Congress needs to stop doing nothing, do right by America's students, America's teachers, America's workers. Let's get to work. Let's get busy. (Applause.) We've got work to do. All of us have work to do -- teachers, school counselors, principals, superintendents, parents, grandparents.

We all have work to do, because we want to see you succeed, because we're counting on you, Barracudas. (Applause.) And if you keep reaching for success -- and I know you will, just based on the small sampling we saw of students here -- if you keep working as hard as you can and learning as much as you can, and if you've got big ambitions and big dreams, if you don't let anybody tell you something is out of your reach, if you are convinced that you can do something and apply effort and energy and determination and persistence to that vision, then not only will you be great but this country will be great. (Applause.) Our schools will be great. (Applause.)

I want us to have the best-educated workforce in America. And I want it to be the most diverse workforce in the world. That's what I'm fighting for. That's what your superintendent and your principal are fighting for, and I hope that's what you fight for yourselves. (Applause.) Because when I meet the students here at Coral Reef, I am optimistic about the future. Michelle and I walked out of that classroom, and we said, you know what, we're going to be in good hands, we're going to do okay. (Applause.) Because these young people are coming, and nobody is going to stop them.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. (Applause.)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE IN DC

Last weekend Vice Chair Lynda Bell and Commissioner Sally Heyman, along with OIA participated in the annual NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. NACo brought together 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 were offered educational opportunities to address current and hot topic issues.

Speakers at the conference included, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman and former Senator Evan Bayh of Indiana, among others.

PRESIDENT RELEASES FY2015 BUDGET REQUEST

On Tuesday, President Obama released his Fiscal Year 2015 Budget. The President released the following statement:

> *"The budget I sent Congress this morning lays out how we'll implement this agenda in a balanced and responsible way. It's a roadmap for creating jobs with good wages and expanding opportunity for all Americans. And at a time when our deficits have been cut in half, it allows us to meet our obligations to future generations without leaving them a mountain of debt.*
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> *"This budget adheres to the spending levels that both parties in both houses of Congress already agreed to. But it also builds on that progress with what we're calling an Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative that invests in our economic priorities in a smart way that is fully paid for by making smart spending cuts and closing tax loopholes that right now only benefit the well-off and the well-connected."*

Pertinent to Miami International Airport in the budget is items relating to salaries, benefits, and operating costs for 21,370 Border Patrol agents and 25,775 CBP officers. The Budget also includes resources to complete the hiring of up to 2,000 new Customs and Border Protection officers which commenced in FY 2014, and an additional 2,000 officers funded by fees in FY 2015, resulting in faster processing and inspecting of passengers and cargo at U.S. ports of entry, as well as more seizures of illegal items, such as drugs, guns, and counterfeit goods. In addition, the Budget includes $362 million to maintain the necessary infrastructure and technology along the Nation's borders to ensure that law enforcement personnel are able to accomplish their objective as rapidly as possible without impediments.

For more information on the FY2015 Budget please use the following link: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget

HOUSE PASSES HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2014

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives passed the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014, H.R. 3370, by a strong bipartisan vote of 306 to 91. The entire Miami-Dade Congressional delegation voted in favor of the measure.

Congressman Garcia, who has been a leader on this issue, released the following statement on the bill's passage:

> *"Flood insurance reform has been a serious issue that has affected millions of people across the country, including those in my district. Soaring premium rate increases have placed harsh and unconscionable financial burdens on policyholders – some so severe they were forced to move from their homes. In an effort to reverse these damaging increases, I have been diligently working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to help bring meaningful reform to the floor for a vote"* Garcia said.

The Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act repeals the bulk of exorbitant rate increases seen under the Biggert-Waters Act, and refunds those who have already paid them. This bill requires an affordability study and includes important considerations for mitigation, bringing critical relief to homeowners nationwide. Though each of these provisions is much needed and timely, Garcia expressed that further reform is essential. Rep. Garcia will continue to work with Congress to fight for additional provisions such as those laid out in the HOME Act, legislation he introduced earlier this year.

> *"I am encouraged by H.R. 3370 and believe it will provide real relief to many homeowners. I am pleased to see that provisions triggering the highest rate increases will be repealed, and that homeowners will be refunded" said Garcia. However, I am disappointed that many home and small business owners will continue to face unfair and unrealistic premium rates. I remain as committed as ever to fighting for stronger, longer-term solutions that will protect every policyholder within my district and throughout the country."*

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart also released the following statement after the passage of H.R. 3370:

> *"Today's vote helps address the harmful and unintended consequences of the Biggert-Waters bill. It applies a commonsense approach, including lasting relief for homeowners while maintaining necessary reforms to provide long-term solvency to the floor insurance program. With passage of this bill, Floridians can rest a little easier knowing that they will be protected from immediate and drastic premium hikes. This bill will help stabilize our real estate market, while also protecting the pockets of hardworking American taxpayers. I would like to thank Majority Leader Cantor for recognizing the need for a vote on this important issue."*

The Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, which will bring relief to tens of thousands of homeowners in Florida and around the nation trying to afford and maintain flood insurance coverage. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz released the following statement as well:

> *"This is not a perfect bill, but it goes a long way in addressing the main unintended consequence of the well-meaning Biggert-Waters Act – the*

unacceptable cost increases for some homeowners caused by uncapped rates," said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. "The consumer protections, affordability goals, and requirements of FEMA that are contained in H.R. 3370 will help give certainty to hard-working Americans, reduce federal spending over the long term, and put the flood insurance program on a path to long-term viability."

Important components of H.R. 3370 include new rate increase caps for most homeowners at 18 percent, which will prevent many of them from experiencing skyrocketing annual premiums; the repeal of so-called 'triggers' so that transportability of flood policies from home seller to buyer are handled fairly and do not disrupt the housing market; and the reinstatement of 'grandfathering', meaning that homeowners who played by the rules and built to code will no longer have to worry about catastrophic rate increases as a result of remapping.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will also be held accountable for its future mapping and affordability study efforts.

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN INTRODUCES BILL EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA

This week, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, introduced H. Res. 488 – a resolution supporting the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democracy, for respect for the rule of law and an end to the violence perpetrated by Nicolas Maduro's thugs. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

"I'm optimistic that the U.S. House will pass my bill expressing support for the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democracy. I hope it will pass so that we send a swift and strong message to Maduro that the United States House of Representatives has taken notice of the developments in Venezuela, and we will not allow these transgressions to pass quietly.

"But this resolution can only be the first step to hold Maduro and his fellow regime thugs accountable for their violent response and their abuses of the Venezuelan people's liberties and human rights. I have already begun circulating a letter amongst my colleagues in the House, addressed to President Obama, asking him to take immediate actions against Maduro and other Venezuelan officials who are responsible for violations of their people's human rights. We are calling for the President to enact immediate sanctions against these officials, under authorities granted to him under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), including denying them visas to enter the United States, blocking their property and freezing their assets in the U.S., as well as prohibiting them from making any financial transactions in the U.S. This letter already enjoys bipartisan support, and I hope the President will recognize the severity of this issue and do the right thing and take these important steps.

"However, I will file a bill this week that would force the implementation of these sanctions even if the President chooses not to use these authorities under IEEPA. Now is not the time to dither or to sit on the fence. The United States must stand up for the people of Venezuela, and for the American ideals of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. Failure to hold Maduro and his officials accountable would be irresponsible and a failure of American leadership."

REP. WILSON ANNOUNCES EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR HAITIAN NATIONALS

Tuesday, Congresswoman Frederica Wilson announced that Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson will extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible nationals of Haiti for an additional 18 months, effective July 23, 2014 through January 22, 2016.

Current Haitian beneficiaries seeking to extend their TPS status must re-register during a 60-day period that runs from March 3, 2014, through May 2, 2014. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) encourages beneficiaries to re-register as soon as possible once the 60-day period begins. USCIS will not accept applications before March 3, 2014.

The 18-month extension also allows TPS re-registrants to apply for a new Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Eligible Haitian TPS beneficiaries who re-register during the 60-day period and request a new EAD will receive one with an expiration date of Jan. 22, 2016. USCIS recognizes that some re-registrants may not receive their new EADs until after their current EADs expire. Therefore, USCIS is automatically extending current TPS Haiti EADs bearing a July 22, 2014 expiration date for an additional six months. These existing EADs are now valid through Jan. 22, 2015.

To re-register, current TPS beneficiaries must submit Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status. Re-registrants do not need to pay the Form I-821 application fee, but they must submit the biometric services fee, or a fee-waiver request, if they are age 14 or older. All TPS re-registrants must also submit Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. TPS re-registrants requesting an EAD must submit the Form I-765 application fee, or a fee-waiver request. If the re-registrant does not want an EAD, no application fee is required.

Applicants may request that USCIS waive the Form I-765 application fee or biometrics fee based on an inability to pay by filing Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver, or by submitting a written request. Fee waiver requests must be accompanied by supporting documentation. Failure to submit the required filing fees or a properly documented fee-waiver request will result in the rejection of the TPS application.

All USCIS forms are free. Applicants can download TPS forms from www.uscis.gov/forms or request them by calling USCIS toll-free at 1-800-870-3676.

SENS. RUBIO & BEGICH FIGHT EPA REGULATIONS, CREATE NATIONAL STANDARD FOR SHIPPING VESSELS

As Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and the Coast Guard, Senator Marco Rubio, along with Subcommittee Chairman Mark Begich (D-AK), introduced a bipartisan bill to set uniform standards for regulating ballast water and other incidental discharges from vessels, and clarify requirements for fishermen and other small boat users.

The bill, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, has broad bipartisan support with 20 co-sponsors, and is widely supported by the maritime industry.

Vessel discharge is most often rainwater and other runoff that accumulates on deck. The Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency currently regulate ballast water under separate, sometimes inconsistent federal statutes and implementing regulations. EPA regulation under the Clean Water Act also opened the door for the States to establish their own varying standards and requirements for incidental vessel discharges. This complicated, inefficient, and confusing patchwork of federal and state requirements is a burden on shippers and other vessel owners that visit multiple ports. Rubio and Begich introduced this bill so one uniform set of environmentally sound standards is put in place.

> *"By creating a national standard for our shipping vessels, we will provide regulatory certainty for American businesses engaged in interstate commerce, with appropriate environmental safeguards,"* said Rubio. *"We have also included a provision that will ensure small businesses and individuals are not unduly burdened by a federal regulatory regime. The strong bipartisan support shows how important this issue is for businesses all across the country. I look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Begich to get this legislation across the finish line so the industries and workers impacted by this can move forward with the regulatory certainty they need."*

About the bill:

The Vessel Incidental Discharge Act would establish ballast water treatment requirements set by the Coast Guard in 2012 as the uniform national standard governing ballast water discharges by vessels. By 2022, the Coast Guard and EPA would be required to issue a revised rule that is 100 times more stringent than the initial ballast water treatment standard. And if a more stringent state ballast water treatment standard is determined to be feasibly achievable, detectable, and commercially available the more stringent standard would be adopted as the uniform national standard.

The legislation would exempt incidental discharges by commercial vessels less than 79 feet, fishing vessels including seafood processors, and recreational vessels, as well as

discharges that occur for research, safety, or similar purposes. Not considered an environmental problem, these vessels have previously been exempted on a year-to-year basis.

REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO INCREASE UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STEM

On Thursday, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz introduced bipartisan legislation with U.S. Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX) that will increase the participation of underrepresented students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. H.R. 4161, the 21st Century STEM for Underrepresented Students Act, would target K-8 students who face barriers to STEM education and programming.

> *"High school and college are often too late to expose students to STEM. That effort must start earlier, and target underrepresented students such as girls, people of color, and those who have historically faced economic or other barriers to STEM achievement,"* said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. *"The impact of not doing this important work is evident in the workforce: women for example make up only 24 percent of STEM career-holders today. We must change that statistic by laying the groundwork now."*

H.R. 4161 will fund research on after-school, out-of-school, and summer STEM pilot programs through National Science Foundation grants. The programs will aim to include experienced non-profit organizations that have a track record of effectively working with underrepresented youth. The National Science Foundation will then analyze the research findings, create best practices, and disseminate and replicate them as appropriate.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Wasserman Schultz is committed to fighting for future funding that will enhance STEM programming nationwide.

> *"This is personal to me. I want my daughters, and all underrepresented students who have the potential to be future STEM leaders, to know that their school and their community can offer them programming, resources, and support that expose them to the STEM fields,"* said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. *"Young people are our future workforce and innovators, and anything that prepares them for a potential STEM career makes us a more competitive, stronger nation."*

SEN. RUBIO INTRODUCES LEGISLATION PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION CREDENTIALS IN FEDERAL HIRING

Senator Marco Rubio introduced on Wednesday, the Alternative Qualifications for Federal Employment Act, a bill that will encourage federal agencies to hire individuals who have obtained education and training from alternative providers rather than a traditional college or university. This pilot program would apply to certain pre-

determined agency positions and would take place over a five-year period. The results of the study would be tracked and reported back to Congress to form the basis for future policy.

Rubio first outlined this idea during a February 10 speech at Miami-Dade College, as part of his agenda to restore the American Dream.

In introducing this legislation, Rubio issued the following statement:

> *"Today there are an infinite number of ways for people to learn and master trades, including many low-cost online opportunities. Unfortunately, our current higher education model is based on a broken accreditation system that favors established institutions while blocking out the new providers that are more affordable and accessible to many Americans.*
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> *"Combined with stringent hiring requirements in many professions, this has created a barrier to entry into the workforce for those who received their education from an unaccredited, alternative provider. By creating a federal pilot program to test the employment of these individuals, I believe we will find that the source of an employee's education is far less important than some previously thought.*
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> *"Those who have the skills and aptitude to be successful in a job deserve the opportunity to be considered for employment, even if they learned the trade from a non-traditional source. This pilot program will likely make that possible by creating private sector confidence in the hiring of these individuals."*

LOOKING AHEAD

March 10 – March 14, 2014:

- The House will be in session
- The Senate will be in session

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