

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 10 – MARCH 14, 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

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN LEADS COUNTY CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION LETTER TO DHS CALLING FOR MORE CBP STAFF AT MIA

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen lead a letter from members of the Miami-Dade congressional delegation, including Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio, to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, asking for assistance in alleviating the ongoing shortage of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at Miami International Airport (MIA). As the largest international hub in Florida, and the second largest in the nation, MIA has experienced dramatic passenger growth and CBP staffing has not kept pace, forcing the closure of certain gateways in order to concentrate CBP officers in appropriate areas.

MIA has worked to meet the increased demand by implementing creative measures such as automated passport kiosks, increasing Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) staffing by 18%, and participating in a reimbursable fee agreement pilot program through CBP, allowing for needed overtime. Despite the efforts of MIA and the leadership and support of the County's congressional delegation, the welcome increase in passenger traffic continues to pose challenges that demand an increase in CBP resources and staffing.

Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

"While it's certainly good news that more people are visiting our home airport, we must ensure that we are adequately prepared for the challenges it poses. Our South Florida congressional delegation and MIA officials have long been focused on how to adequately staff MIA so that we ensure a safe and seamless travel experience for our local residents and visitors. MIA should have the staff necessary to make it the world-class airport we know it can be."

Below is the text of the letter:

*The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U. S. Department of Homeland Security*

Washington. D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

As Members of the Miami-Dade Congressional Delegation, we are writing to request your assistance in addressing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staffing at Miami International Airport (MIA). We write with a sense of urgency because the facilitation of international passengers and freight at MIA, along with the ability to accommodate growth in passenger traffic and commerce, continues to be severely impacted due to insufficient CBP officer staffing levels. This is adversely impacting economic growth for Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and destinations throughout the United States.

MIA is the largest international hub in the State of Florida with 69% of all international passenger traffic. It is also the second largest international gateway in the U.S. with 40% of international passenger traffic. Unfortunately, international passenger arrivals at MIA continue to suffer burdensome wait times and daily missed connections. Over the past five years, MIA's international passenger traffic has grown 24.2 % more than any other U.S. international gateway, while overall CBP staffing at MIA has essentially remained flat.

To address the surge of international passenger traffic, Miami-Dade County has invested more than \$180 million toward a new 400,000-square-foot state-of-the-art Federal Inspection Station (FIS) in MIA's North Terminal. The facility opened in July 2012, providing MIA's airline partners with three terminals to accommodate their international passengers and customers. However, MIA has not been able to recognize the efficiencies of its North Terminal investment due to CBP's inability to provide adequate staffing of the new facility, without compromising staffing in the South and Central terminal FIS' and the critical cargo inspection process.

The Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD), with the support of its airline partners, has implemented numerous initiatives to mitigate CBP staffing shortfalls, including: closing the Central Terminal FIS to allow CBP to concentrate its resources to the South and North FIS facilities, increasing MDAD staffing by 18 percent in the FIS' to provide passenger assistance and crowd management; and the installation of 36 Automated Passport Control (APC) self serve kiosks to increase the productivity of CBP processing.

Most recently, in a creative attempt to mitigate the severe CBP staffing shortages, MDAD participated in the CBP Sec. 560 reimbursable fee agreement pilot program. This program allows MIA to leverage \$6 million to reimburse CBP for overtime costs associated with inspection services above and beyond currently authorized levels.

Despite these efforts, CBP's insufficient staffing levels continue to plague MIA's current operations and are unable to meet the unprecedented growth in our international travel market. Indeed, six new international carriers and one new domestic carrier with service to an international destination joined MIA in 2012 and 2013 and our hub airline AA added 13 new international routes. In 2014, there are six confirmed new international airlines starting service at MIA and there are currently ongoing discussions with eleven airlines for new service to MIA. Additionally, five existing MIA air carriers are planning on expanding service for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016.

With the expansion and attractiveness of global tourist destinations, larger aircraft and new fuel efficiencies, U.S. airports are in strong competition with other global international airports for trade and tourism. MIA has invested in the necessary infrastructure to accommodate its growth and it would be unconscionable if a key U.S. port of entry cannot capitalize on new markets and additional international air service because of CBP's insufficient staffing levels. Based on MIA's current and projected international passenger arrival levels, CBP staffing at MIA remains inadequate and threatens to undermine bipartisan efforts to significantly increase travel and tourism to the United States. Inaction to address this issue will only serve to threaten the competitiveness and economic growth of Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and the United States.

In accordance with all applicable rules and regulations, we ask that you address these critical CBP staffing issues at MIA. We thank you for your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Sen. Bill Nelson

Sen. Marco Rubio

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Rep. Frederica Wilson

Rep. Joe Garcia

CONGRESS PASSES FLOOD INSURANCE FIX – BIG WIN FOR FLORIDA'S COUNTIES

On Thursday, by a vote of 72-22, the United States Senate passed the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014, H.R. 3370. This vote followed last week's passage of the bill in the House of Representatives, 306 to 91. The entire Miami-Dade Congressional delegation, in both houses, voted in favor of the measure. The bill now goes to the President for his signature.

Congressman Garcia has been a leader on this issue in the House, along with Rep. Diaz-Balart and the entire County delegation. Rep. Garcia released the following statement upon the bill's passage:

"I commend my colleagues in the Senate for stepping up in the name of struggling, middle-class homeowners. The Homeowner's Flood Insurance Affordability Act represents the first meaningful step forward in National Flood Insurance Program reform. Although I believe that further reform and stronger protections are needed, today we have reason to celebrate."

The Miami-Dade delegation issued the following statements last week when the bill passed the House of Representatives.

"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 flood 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.

SEN. NELSON CALLS SEA-LEVEL RISE, CLIMATE CHANGE 'COMPELLING STORY,' ANNOUNCES FIELD HEARING

*By Anthony Adragna
Bloomberg BNA*

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) told Bloomberg BNA he plans to hold a field hearing April 22 in Miami Beach with members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

It is not clear whether the hearing will be a full committee or subcommittee hearing. Nelson chairs the Subcommittee on Science and Space.

“South Florida is the area that is most threatened by sea level rise in the continental U.S.,” Nelson told Bloomberg BNA.

Nelson said the hearing also will examine how local governments in the area are adjusting to the impacts of both climate change and sea level rise and how shifts in the climate are affecting budgetary decisions in local communities.

A day earlier, during the Senate's all-night session on climate change, Nelson took to the floor to call South Florida “ground zero for sea level rise.”

“What is threatened the most in the continental United States is the Miami area,” Nelson said March 10. “We have a compelling story to tell.”

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has identified South Florida as one of the vulnerable regions in the world to property damage as a result of sea level rise.

A city official told Bloomberg BNA in December 2012 that Miami modified building codes to require new buildings to be more resilient to hurricanes and has increased its number of stormwater pumps from four to 11 over the past 10 years .

South Florida ‘Highly Vulnerable.’

Projections for sea level rise in South Florida are 1.5 feet to 2.3 feet by mid-century and three feet to five feet by 2100, leaving the region “highly vulnerable to the effects of global sea level rise,” according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

“Infrastructure in highly-developed areas that are at risk include power plants, power generating facilities, airports, solid waste disposal sites, schools, prisons and hospitals,” according to the 2011 NRDC fact sheet.

SENS. RUBIO, NELSON & MENENDEZ INTRODUCE THE VENEZUELA DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACT

As members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio and Senator Bill Nelson, along with Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ), introduced the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014.

This bipartisan legislation authorizes \$15 million in new funding in the FY2015 budget to defend human rights, support democratic civil society organizations, assist independent media, and strengthen good governance and the rule of law in the face of the massive violence and repression being carried out by President Maduro against peaceful protesters.

It also requires President Obama to impose sanctions on persons that have been involved in serious human rights violations against peaceful demonstrators and others in Venezuela, or that have directed or ordered the arrest or prosecution of a person due to their legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly.

The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution introduced by Rubio outlining the framework for legislative action on Venezuela.

“The full U.S. Congress has spoken loudly and clearly that we stand with the Venezuelan people as they exercise their fundamental rights, and we condemn

the Maduro regime's deadly wave of repression," said Rubio. "Now it's time for actions that name, shame and punish the Maduro regime's murderers and thugs who are responsible for the crackdown against innocent Venezuelans.

"Now is the time to stand with the Venezuelan people and increase pressure on the Maduro regime," added Rubio. "I hope we can begin to move quickly to consider this legislation when the Senate reconvenes on March 24."

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN BILL TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, along with Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Rep. Joe Garcia, Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ), Rep. Matt Salmon (R-AZ), Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-FL), Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL), Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and Lois Frankel (D-FL) introduced H.R. 4229 - Venezuelan Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which seeks to hold accountable violators of human rights of the Maduro regime.

H.R. 4229, Venezuelan Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act is an important legislation that:

- Denies visas to enter the United States, blocks property, freezes assets, and prohibits financial transactions to members of the Venezuelan regime who are responsible for the commission of serious human rights abuses against the citizens of Venezuela;
- Makes a Statement of Policy that calls for the U.S. government to further reduce its imports of Venezuelan oil;
- Calls on the President to transmit to Congress a report on persons that are engaged in censorship or other activities with respect to the Venezuelan regime that prohibit, limit, or penalize the exercise of freedom of expression or limits access to print or broadcast media; and
- Directs the United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States at the OAS to defend and protect the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and strengthen the independent Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to advance the protection of human rights throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

"With at least 24 killed and more than 100 injured by the Maduro regime over the past three weeks, the United States has a moral obligation to support the people of Venezuela in their pursuit of democratic ideals and to punish those responsible for violating human rights and basic freedoms. This bill sends a clear message to

Maduro and other repressive leaders in the region that the U.S. will not stand idly by as they assault democratic institutions and violate human rights. It shows that we will take action to ensure that those who stomp on the rights and dignity of others will be held accountable.”

Also, during a hearing this week, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart questioned Secretary of State John Kerry during a hearing of the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee on the Administration’s inaction towards the ongoing problem in Venezuela.

“Today, I asked Secretary Kerry in a hearing about the Administration placing sanctions on Maduro’s regime in response to their oppressive and criminal acts towards the Venezuelan people. Unfortunately, he did not give me a clear answer with specifics as to what the Administration will do. As I mentioned in the hearing, I firmly believe the United States must deny and revoke visas, freeze assets, prohibit financial transactions, and issue other such sanctions to the perpetrators of the violence and human rights violations in Venezuela. These are sanctions the President can unilaterally and immediately enact using his pen. The United States must name and shame them.”

NACO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHASE DISCUSSES FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ISSUES, OUTLINES KEY COUNTY PRIORITIES IN MAP-21 REWRITE

On March 13, National Association of Counties (NACo) Executive Director Matt Chase participated in a bipartisan roundtable that focused on the pending insolvency of the federal Highway Trust Fund and the expiration of the federal surface transportation bill, MAP-21. The roundtable was led by U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.).

Chase emphasized that counties play a critical role in the nation’s transportation system. Counties own 45 percent of the nation’s public roads and 39 percent of the nation’s bridge inventory. Counties are involved in a third of the nation’s transit systems and airports. Each year, counties invest more than \$106 billion in public works and public facilities, including more than \$25 billion on roads and bridges through a blend of federal, state and local resources.

“NACo and our county members support a six-year reauthorization bill that provides long-term funding certainty and addresses our growing infrastructure needs,” Chase explained. “We also want to build on MAP-21 reforms to expedite project delivery, ensure local county officials are involved in the transportation decision-making process, and provide much needed funding for county bridges and roads.”

Chase noted that county officials are facing major decisions on whether to cancel or delay future transportation construction and maintenance projects with the pending

bankruptcy of the federal Highway Trust Fund in the summer of 2014. “The economic recovery for most counties remains fragile and uneven. Counties rely on a blend of federal, state and local funding and financing to maintain our county transportation assets. The growing uncertainty at the federal level will most likely result in delayed or cancelled projects, costing more jobs and pain for county governments and private contractors.”

Other NACo priorities include support for innovative funding and financing methods, make safety a priority on all roads and bridges and support public transportation systems of all sizes.

Federal surface transportation programs were most recently reauthorized in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), which was enacted on July 6, 2012. MAP-21 expires in September 2014.

Click [here](#) to read NACo’s MAP-21 reauthorization fact sheet, and [here](#) to read NACo’s MAP-21 reauthorization priorities.

NACo recently released *"The Road Ahead: County Transportation Funding and Financing,"* a study assessing the role of counties in transportation and the challenges and solutions to the funding and financing of their transportation systems. Click [here](#) to view this comprehensive report.

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN ACCEPTS AWARD FROM FLORIDA RIGHT TO LIFE

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen was honored to accept an award from Florida’s leading pro-life organization, Florida Right to Life, for her leadership on pro-life issues and her tireless work to protect the rights of the unborn. Ros-Lehtinen has long been a staunch advocate for the rights of the unborn and her passion in this important issue stems from her experience as a mother, grandmother, and her determination to protect human rights around the globe.

She has led on the issue of mandatory parental consent to obtain an abortion and has re-introduced legislation, the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, to make it a crime to transport a minor across state lines for the purposes of getting an abortion without parental consent. Ros-Lehtinen has also voted to prohibit taxpayer subsidies for abortion.

Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

“The lives of the unborn are precious and should be protected. For too long, too many innocent lives have been lost and ensuring that they are not taken needlessly should be one of our highest priorities. I’m honored to receive this award from Florida Right to Life, we must do our utmost to protect innocent life.”

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN SPEAKS ON HOUSE FLOOR ABOUT MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES DEPARTMENT

Last week, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen spoke on the House floor regarding the upcoming “In the Company of Women” awards, hosted by the Miami-Dade Commission for Women, the Parks Foundation of Miami-Dade, and the Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department. Here’s a link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccZCyLQjQiE&feature=youtu.be>

FORMER FLORIDA GOVERNOR REUBIN ASKEW PASSES

This week, former Florida Governor Reubin Askew passed away. Governor Askew was the 37th Governor of Florida, serving from 1971-1979.

Senator Marco Rubio issued the following statement on the passing of former Governor:

“As one of the most beloved and effective governors in Florida’s history, Reubin Askew’s service improved the lives of many people across our state. He played a critical role in shaping Florida into the great state it is today, championing government transparency, stronger ethics laws and civil rights.

“One of the most remarkable things about Askew’s time in office is how deeply it embodies the values by which he lived. Throughout his many years of service, it was often his personal integrity that inspired the public. Askew was a man of principle, guiding Florida through a critical time in America’s history by advocating such things as racial tolerance and school desegregation. And although he was a Democrat, he believed in the sanctity of unborn life.

“Reubin Askew led by example, and his efforts to promote the good in both people and our government will never be forgotten. My wife Jeanette and I send our condolences to his family and friends as they mourn his passing and celebrate his life.”

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz also issued the following statement:

“Today is a sad day for Floridians, particularly for the generation of policymakers and leaders who came of age in a more progressive, more pragmatic, more inspirational political climate thanks to the leadership and vision of Governor Reubin Askew.

“Mr. Askew left an indelible mark in Tallahassee as both a state legislator and a popular two-term governor, and in many ways moved Florida ahead of the nation on issues such as tax reform, equality and civil rights, and environmental protection.

"My thoughts are with Governor Askew's wife and children as they mourn his passing. I join them in honoring his exemplary service to his state and to his country."

LOOKING AHEAD

March 17 – March 21, 2014:

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

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