

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 31 – APRIL 4, 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

LAST WEEK, COMMISSIONER MONESTIME JOINS GREATER MIAMI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FLY-IN

Last week, Commissioner Jean Monestime and the Aviation Department along with OIA joined the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce for their annual Washington fly-in. The Chamber met with the county's Congressional delegation as well as officials from the Departments of Commerce, State and Homeland Security, among other congressional member and committee staff.

ALSO LAST WEEK, AVIATION DIRECTOR GONZALEZ IN DC

Last week, Aviation Director Emilio Gonzalez was also in Washington for a series of meetings with the Miami-Dade Congressional delegation as well as officials from Customs and Board Protection. The Director, who was in town for the Florida Airports Council fly-in, continued to advocate for an increase in CBP staffing at MIA (see below for additional information) during his meetings.

ALSO LAST WEEK, PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES IN DC

Last week, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Director Jack Kardys was in town for a conference and took the opportunity to meet with the county's Congressional delegation. OIA set up meetings and joined the director on visits with the entire Miami-Dade County congressional delegation as well as with Congressman Albio Sires of New Jersey.

Congressman Sires is the sponsor the Community Parks Revitalization Act (H.R.2424) which would authorize Housing and Urban Development to provide funding to Parks and Recreation agencies through matching grant programs for construction, programs and recovery action. This legislation would significantly aid the department's efforts.

CBP ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL CBP STAFFING; DELEGATION SENDS LETTER TO CBP COMMISSIONER

U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced that they would allocate 2,000 additional staff as appropriated by the FY 2014 omnibus. Miami International Airport was notified by the offices of Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Mario Diaz-Balart, who participated in a call with CBP that MIA would be part of this allocation. While the allocation is a helpful step in alleviating the staffing shortage, it is not nearly enough to satisfy the urgent need for more agents. The Congressional delegation, along with Aviation Director Emilio Gonzalez and OIA, continue to request from the administration, DHS and CBP for additional agents to be assigned to MIA.

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart released the following statement after the announcement:

"South Florida's ports of entry are a vital part of our community's economic engine. I'm thrilled that CBP announced additional CBP officers at Miami International Airport and Fort Lauderdale Airport, which will help streamline security and customs lines, making traveling through our airports easier and more efficient for both tourists and business travelers. Long wait times have been a huge burden on airport staff and travelers. Since joining the Appropriations Committee, I've worked tirelessly to increase much needed staffing at CBP."

"Earlier this year, I helped secure a victory for Florida's ports when Congress funded an additional 2,000 CBP officers, and last year MIA was only one of five ports nationwide to be selected to participate in a public-private partnership program to hire additional CBP officers."

"Chairman Rogers of the Appropriations Committee and Chairman Carter of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee have been crucial to getting this issue resolved, and I'm grateful that today's announcement will result in a reduction of the cumbersome wait times."

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen led a letter from members of the South Florida delegation to recently confirmed Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske urging him to visit Miami International Airport (MIA) to see, first-hand, how the shortage of CBP officers has negatively impacted wait times and processing at MIA. Members of the South Florida Delegation, Sens. Nelson and Rubio and Reps. Ros-Lehtinen, Diaz-Balart, Wasserman Schultz, Wilson, and Garcia, have worked in a bi-partisan manner to help MIA deal with a welcome growth in passenger traffic, which is only projected to increase especially during major world events, such as the World Cup.

Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

"MIA is a world-class airport that should be equipped to handle a greater influx of passengers and anticipated major world events. South Florida and our nation should be able to depend on a fully-functioning gateway to the Americas. All

federal officials and agencies should have a thorough understanding of MIA's needs. I hope Commissioner Kerlikowske will visit South Florida soon and see how vital the proper functioning of MIA is to our nation."

The text of the letter sent by the Miami-Dade County Congressional delegation:

*The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Washington, DC 20528*

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

We are writing to congratulate you on your recent confirmation as Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and to extend to you an invitation to visit Miami International Airport (MIA) to witness firsthand MIA's critical need for additional CBP officers. As members of the Miami-Dade Congressional Delegation, we sent a letter earlier this month to the Secretary of Homeland Security requesting his assistance in addressing MIA's rapidly escalating CBP staffing crisis.

International passenger traffic at MIA has grown 30 percent in the last six years, which is more than any other U.S. gateway, but CBP has not increased staffing levels to keep up with this unprecedented growth. Despite numerous initiatives by the Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) to address CBP staffing shortfalls, long wait times and missed flights continue to plague arriving international passengers. MIA invested in a new 72-lane federal inspection services (FIS) facility in 2012 and recently installed 36 automated passport control kiosks with an additional 36 on order. MDAD has also increased FIS staffing by 18 percent to assist passengers at kiosks and is one of only three airports to volunteer for CBP's new reimbursable fee agreement pilot program to reimburse CBP for additional overtime costs.

MIA is the "Gateway to the Americas," serving as the port-of-entry for nearly 10 million international passengers annually and contributing approximately \$33 billion and 272,000 direct and indirect jobs to our economy. These numbers are expected to increase rapidly in the coming years, as MIA will be responsible for a large percentage of the Obama administration's National Travel and Tourism Strategy stated goal of 100 million annual international visitors to our nation by 2021. To meet the demand, MIA has added nine new international carriers in the past three years and is in discussions to add 11 more. In addition, MIA hub carrier American Airlines has added 12 new international routes in the last two years, and two of MIA's other carriers will expand service to Brazil for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016.

As MIA enters its busiest period of the year and prepares for an influx of travelers for the 2014 World Cup, the CBP staffing shortage needs to be addressed

immediately. Without adequate numbers of CBP officers, international passengers will continue to experience long wait times and missed flights, and MIA's reputation as a world-class travel and business destination will be in serious jeopardy. The economic impact of MIA on Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and the entire nation is too important to allow these problems to continue, and we hope you will accept our invitation to visit MIA in the coming weeks to see for yourself.

As you begin your tenure as Commissioner, we believe your support in addressing this matter is of paramount importance. Therefore, we respectfully request that you consider visiting MIA personally as soon as possible.

*Sincerely,
Senator Bill Nelson
Senator Marco Rubio
Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart
Congresswoman Federica Wilson
Congressman Joe Garcia*

COMMISSIONER MONESTIME JOINS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION ON TRIP TO HAITI

This past weekend, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen led a bipartisan Congressional Delegation to Haiti with South Florida Colleagues Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart and Frederica Wilson to Examine the Use of USAID Funds. Joining the delegation was Miami-Dade County Commissioner Jean Monestime.

Statement by Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen:

"I am glad that my colleagues Mario Diaz-Balart and Frederica Wilson are joining me on this bipartisan trip to Haiti. Our vibrant Haitian-American community in South Florida has played an essential role in helping the people of Haiti and promoting the strong bond that binds our countries together. Three years after the devastating earthquake, it is important for us to reexamine the progress of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Haiti and urge for new free, fair, and transparent elections this year."

Statement by Congressman Diaz-Balart:

"It has been more than 4 years that the people of Haiti experienced a devastating earthquake. The U.S. government and the American people have been incredibly generous in their support of Haiti's rebuilding and development efforts, but our support has recently faced obstacles. With reports that U.S. government funding in Haiti has been mishandled, I look forward to getting on the ground

assessment of the current economic and political conditions in Haiti. The ties between South Florida and Haiti run deep, and I am eager to once again meet with Haitian government officials, civil society, and the business sectors to discuss strategy to restore stability and create prosperity through the country.”

Statement by Congresswoman Wilson:

“It has been four years since the worst natural disaster in recent memory occurred in Haiti—the Haiti Earthquake of 2010. Despite heavy investment in Haiti, many projected goals have not been met. I am committed to restoring Haiti for the good of its people, who are more than our neighbors; they are the loved ones of my constituents, my staff, and my friends and family. It is time to renew our efforts to rebuild Haiti by insisting on accountability and transparency.”

Congressman Diaz-Balart also discussed the trip in detail in his weekly newsletter:

“This weekend, I had the opportunity to join my colleagues, Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Frederica Wilson, on a Congressional Delegation to Haiti. It has been over four years since the island was ravaged by the 2010 earthquake. Both the U.S. government and the American people have been incredibly generous in their support of Haiti's rebuilding and development efforts, but recently, our support has faced obstacles. There have been reports that U.S. government funding on the island has been abused and mishandled, with many vital projects facing unnecessary delays and lacking substantial progress. One of the main purposes of the trip was to have an on the ground assessment of exactly how these funds are being used, making sure that American taxpayer dollars are not being wasted.”

During our trip, we met with U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Pamela White, President of Haiti Michel Martelly, members of the Haitian Parliament, and Haitian Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe to discuss post-earthquake issues that still affect the island, the need for elections, and the effective distribution and use of U.S. government funding. We also participated in visits to a housing site, the national police academy, and the country's only critical care and trauma hospital.”

The ties between South Florida and Haiti are strong, and we believe our communities can play a meaningful role in Haiti's future and the rebuilding process. We believe private investment in Haiti will lead to long-term economic growth and much needed jobs. I look forward to continue working with both Haitian and American government officials to make sure Haiti remains on a path to rebuilding its homes and businesses and restoring stability and a sense of community.”

**REP. GARCIA JOINS FELLOW HOUSE MEMBERS URGING
ADMINISTRATION TO PROTECT MEDICARE ADVANTAGE FOR
SENIORS**

Congressman Joe Garcia spoke on the House floor this week in strong opposition to the administration's proposed cuts to Medicare. On April 7th, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is scheduled to release their final rule on payment rates for Medicare Advantage. Over the past few weeks Rep. Garcia has spoken with the President personally to communicate his strong support for the program, as well as his strong opposition to any proposed cuts by CMS. Earlier in the week, Congressman Garcia also met with top level officials expressing his concerns over the cuts to these vital services, urging them to find alternative solutions in an effort to protect our seniors.

Additionally, Garcia has worked with Colleagues on both sides of the aisle, issuing a letter to the administration, urging the same.

"For half a century, Medicare has lifted millions of seniors out of poverty and provided them with the health care they need and deserve" expressed Garcia. "It is our responsibility to strengthen and modernize Medicare to ensure that it continues to provide our nation's seniors – who have rightfully earned their benefits – the high quality care they depend on."

Currently, about 28% of Medicare beneficiaries are enrolled in Medicare Advantaged plans. These programs have an approval rating of over 90% and planned cuts would have a devastating effect on seniors.

"In my district, I have heard first hand from so many seniors how well Medicare is serving them. This is not a political or partisan issue, this is an issue about people" Garcia said.

WATER AND SEWER DEPT. PARTICIPATES IN AMERICAN WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION FLY-IN

This week, Edgar Fernandez of the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department was in town for the annual American Water Works Association (AWWA) DC Fly-In. With the assistance of the federal contract lobbyists, OIA scheduled meetings with the county's congressional delegation. Among the topics of discussion was the WRRDA bill, now in conference negotiations, specifically the WIFIA provision which is essential to the improvement of water infrastructure in the county as well as other county priorities.

OIA and the federal contract lobbyists have advocated for WIFIA's inclusion in a final WRRDA bill, which is expected to be released in the coming weeks. OIA will continue to update the county on the progress of negotiations.

REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ STATEMENT ON NHTSA VEHICLE REAR VISIBILITY RULE

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz made the following statement after the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued a final rule requiring rear visibility technology in all new vehicles under 10,000 pounds by May 2018:

"Today's welcome announcement from NHTSA resonates with me as a parent and as a policymaker. I live on a small block where neighborhood children, including my own, are often playing games and riding their bikes. As they have for me in my family's vehicles, rearview cameras will help enhance the alertness we must maintain as responsible parents and community members each time we put the car in reverse."

"Child health and safety have been guiding forces in my legislative career. The time is right to take advantage of this affordable technology in order to reduce accidents and save lives."

REP. GARCIA APPLAUDS REP. CARDENAS' IMMIGRATION REFORM AMENDMENT TO THE RYAN BUDGET PLAN

Congressman Joe Garcia stood in support with Congressman Tony Cardenas (CA-29) as he introduced an amendment to the Ryan Budget plan that would create the economic infrastructure to support H.R. 15. The amendment inserts all the revenue, outlays, and policy assumptions creating space in the budget for comprehensive immigration reform. Estimates show that the bi-partisan H.R. 15 bill would lower the federal deficit by more than \$900 billion, in addition to creating 120,000 additional jobs each year.

"I commend Rep. Cardenas for his leadership and pledge to further this cause" said Rep. Garcia. *"This amendment is not only good for our families but our economy as well. This budget amendment highlights the economic impact our immigrant community has on our society."*

The amendment vote failed on party lines in a 21-15 vote.

In addition to these efforts, late last week, Congressman Garcia led a discharge petition demanding a vote for comprehensive immigration reform. So far there are 187 co-signers on the petition.

In October 2013, Congressman Garcia introduced H.R. 15 – a bill seeking to secure our nation's borders, protect workers, unite families, and offer hardworking immigrants an earned pathway to citizenship. So far, the bill has 198 co-sponsors.

REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ ENTERS INTO FINAL FOUR BET

Representatives Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Joe Courtney (CT-02) announced a friendly wager on Saturday's NCAA Final Four Semifinal contest between the UConn Huskies and the University of Florida Gators men's basketball teams.

"As a Gator fan who bleeds orange and blue, I'm thrilled our guys have made it back to the Final Four of the Big Dance," said Wasserman Schultz. "Unlike their last game versus UConn, the Gators are playing at full strength and with legendary coach Billy Donovan at the helm, Florida is just one Husky road-kill away en route to their 3rd basketball championship."

If Florida should win, Congressman Courtney will provide a gift basket of eastern Connecticut signature treats including Munson's Chocolates, Selbuort Valley Farms Maple Syrup, Cato Corner Cheese, Deep River Chips, Jarmoc cigars and Cottrell Beer.

If UConn should win, Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz will provide platters from the Gainesville institution Burrito Bros. Taco Co., which will include their epic burritos and famous guac.

LOOKING AHEAD

April 7 – April 11, 2014:

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

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