

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

April 28- May 2, 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. GARCIA ISSUES STATEMENT ON ARMY CORPS CENTRAL EVERGLADES PROJECT DECISION

Congressman Joe Garcia issued the following statement last week in response to the decision yesterday by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works Review Board to delay the approval of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP).

"I am greatly disappointed by the U.S. Army Corps' decision to needlessly delay the approval of CEPP. Everglades National Park is a one-of-a kind natural wonder that we have a responsibility to protect, preserve and restore for the benefit of current and future generations. A critical component of the comprehensive long-term plan to restore the Everglades, CEPP will do a great deal to improve water quality, supply, and flow through both Everglades National Park and into Florida Bay. That these critical efforts will be delayed for bureaucratic reasons is deeply concerning. I am committed to working with my colleagues and other stakeholders to make sure that the Corps gets this process back on track, addresses the review board's concerns, and approves CEPP as quickly as possible."

The following letter was sent to Army Corps of Engineers, signed by some members of the Miami-Dade Congressional delegation, indicating their disappointment with the delay.

*The Honorable Io-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108*

Dear Assistant Secretary:

We are writing to express our extreme disappointment with the Army Corps Civil Works Review Board's decision to delay proceeding forward with finalizing the

Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) and to urge the Corps to reconvene as quickly as possible in order to finalize the CEPP Chiefs Report.

The importance of this project to America's Everglades cannot be understated. Every rainy season, the Army Corps sends discharges of nutrient heavy fresh water from Lake Okeechobee out to our coastal estuaries instead of sending the water south to the critical habitats of Everglades National Park that desperately need fresh water. Discharges of nutrient heavy fresh water from Lake Okeechobee have plagued the coastal estuaries and communities of Florida for far too long. These releases contribute to an influx of fresh water harmful to public health, the fragile estuaries, and tourism-based economies of the area. The opposite problem exists south of the lake where fresh water is desperately needed to restore the natural ecosystem and crucial habitats of Everglades National Park. Delaying the approval and construction and implementation of CEPP is harmful to Everglades restoration efforts and to people of south Florida that rely on fresh water for their health and their livelihoods. Time is of the essence in moving forward with this critical Everglades restoration project.

We welcome members of the Review Board to witness first-hand the serious environmental problems that the completion of CEPP will help address, such as the damage that releases from Lake Okeechobee have on the coastal estuaries and the communities that depend on the water quality of their local waterways.

We again urge the Army Corps to move forward as expeditiously as possible. Please provide us with a written response that includes the upcoming dates and schedule for the Army Corps' plans to finalize CEPP.

Sincerely,

Senator Bill Nelson
Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart
Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Congressman Joe Garcia
Congressman Ander Crenshaw
Congressman Alcee Hastings
Congressman Bill Posey
Congressman Patrick Murphy
Congressman Lois Frankel
Congressman Ted Deutch
Congressman Thomas Rooney

OIA will continue to monitor this situation and work with the Congressional delegation towards a remedy on this issue.

REP. GARCIA CELEBRATES THE ARMY CORPS' DECISION TO MOVE FORWARD ON CANAL C-111 SOUTH DADE

Although not related to the aforementioned CEPP issue, the Army Corps of Engineers announced Wednesday that they have reached an agreement allowing Everglades Restoration to resume in South Dade after nearly two years of project delay.

Over the past several months, Congressman Garcia has personally relayed the importance of completing Canal C-111 South Dade – an element of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan – to Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, Assistant Secretary Jo Ellen Darcy of the Army Corps, and other agency and administration officials.

“I am thrilled by the joint decision of the Army Corps and South Florida Water Management District, and look forward to swift movement on C-111 Canal construction. This canal will prove critical to the health of the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay, and provide much needed protection to the agricultural fields that drive our regional economy,” said Garcia.

Canal C-111 South Dade is one of the most critical Everglades Restoration projects to South Miami-Dade, Florida Bay, and the Florida Keys. The canal connects restorative water flow projects in the Northern Glades with critical ecosystems to the South – including Taylor Slough, which has seen an estimated 75% decrease in water intake, and northern Florida Bay, where salinity levels and water quality have been drastically affected by a failed drainage system.

Not only will this lead to improved conditions in Everglades National Park, Florida Bay, and for supported plant and animal life, it will also provide critical flood protection to South Dade’s large farming community. Growers just west of the park have long suffered from failed crops and inundated agricultural fields due to excessive water run-off in bordering, occupied areas. C-111 South Dade will divert water to the east, away from the agricultural fields and various low-lying crops that support South Florida’s economy.

DOT SECRETARY FOXX SENDS TRANSPORTATION BILL TO CONGRESS

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx today unveiled a long-term transportation bill he is sending to Congress for consideration as the House and Senate face looming deadlines to avoid the economic uncertainty and job loss that would ensue if the Highway Trust Fund runs out of money this summer. The [GROW AMERICA Act](#) reflects President Obama’s vision for a four-year surface transportation reauthorization bill.

On February 26, Secretary Foxx joined President Obama to announce a plan to address the nation’s infrastructure deficit with a \$302 billion, four-year surface transportation reauthorization proposal. As outlined in the FY2015 budget, the plan will invest in a national infrastructure network, increase safety and efficiency, and provide

greater access to ladders of opportunity, all without adding to the deficit, by relying on the President's proposed pro-growth business tax reforms.

The GROW AMERICA Act is based on this plan, and represents a number of proposals that have historically attracted bipartisan support including:

- Addressing the shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and providing an additional \$87 billion to address the nation's backlog of deficient bridges and aging transit systems;
- Creating millions of new jobs to ensure America's future competitiveness;
- Increasing safety across all modes of surface transportation, including increasing the civil penalties the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) can levy against automakers who fail to act quickly on vehicle recalls;
- Providing certainty to state and local governments that must engage in long-term planning;
- Reducing project approval and permitting timelines while delivering better outcomes for communities and the environment;
- Bolstering efficient and reliable freight networks to support trade and economic growth; and
- Creating incentives to better align planning and investment decisions to comprehensively address regional economic needs while strengthening local decision-making.

In April, Secretary Foxx traveled across the country on his *Invest in America, Commit to the Future* bus tour, with visits to manufacturers, bridges, freight facilities, and highway projects to raise awareness of America's infrastructure deficit. Secretary Foxx met with business leaders, stakeholders and members of communities to discuss the projects that work, projects that are needed, and to ask them to commit to a future with an American transportation system that's second-to-none.

In the face of current uncertainty of federal transportation investment, many states have postponed or canceled needed transportation projects altogether. And without additional investment, deficiencies in our nation's infrastructure will cost businesses more than \$1 trillion every year in lost sales. Despite this growing need, the Highway Trust Fund, which provides most of the federal support for state transportation projects, is on track to start bouncing checks as early as August. In January, the Department of Transportation began posting a ticker online so the American people can track the remaining funds, available [here](#).

SEN. NELSON ASKS PRESIDENT OBAMA FOR FEDERAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESIDENTS IN FLORIDA PANHANDLE

Sen. Bill Nelson has written President Obama asking for federal resources to help residents in Florida Panhandle areas that were clobbered by the severe weather system that blew through the South.

Deaths, property destruction and flooding have been reported in a number of states including Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

On Wednesday, Escambia County Commissioner Grover Robinson was among those calling for federal assistance by contacting U.S. Sens. Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio and U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller.

While a formal disaster request would first have to come from Gov. Rick Scott, who's touring the impacted areas today, Nelson wrote Obama in anticipation of such.

"I ask that you ensure all necessary federal support is offered as needed to protect life and property in the communities affected by these storms," Nelson wrote in his letter to the president.

Hundreds of Panhandle residents were caught off guard by fast rising waters from torrential rains that pounded the area in a span of about 24 hours. About 30,000 residents are reportedly without power and at least one death in Florida is being attributed to the storm.

All told, more than three dozen deaths have been reported nationwide.

Below is the text of Nelson's letter to the President:

April 30, 2014

*The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500*

Dear President Obama,

As you are aware, severe storms have recently struck the Panhandle of Florida after devastating a number of other communities across the Southeast United States.

In addition to loss of life and serious injuries in other states, reports indicate that at least two people have died in Florida. Therefore, it's critical that these communities receive assistance to deal with critical needs. Already, a state of emergency has been declared in 26 counties and the Florida National Guard has been activated. I ask that you ensure all necessary federal support is offered as needed to protect life and property in the communities affected by these storms.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

SEN. RUBIO & SENATE REPUBLICANS INTRODUCE STRATEGIC U.S. RESPONSE TO DETER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN EUROPE

Senator Marco Rubio, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced legislation with 20 Senate Republicans providing a strategic U.S. response to deter Russian aggression in Europe, which threatens regional security and prosperity that is critical for maintaining economic growth in the United States.

"We live in a global economy. As Americans, our ability to sell goods and services to other nations is critical to our economic future and to the creation of jobs. We cannot allow the world to become a place where countries become off limits to us, as markets, because they are afraid of a more powerful neighbor taking actions against them," said Rubio. "And that's precisely what's happened here. And it's setting a precedent, especially for countries like Russia and potentially China, that if you don't want a neighboring country to do more commerce and trade and economic engagement with the West, you simply invade them or intimidate them.

"What this bill endeavors to do, these sanctions will do, is it will change that calculus. It will change that calculus so that he and the people around him realize that the costs of having taken this action now far outweigh any perceived benefits," added Rubio. "We think that's what our foreign policy should be grounded on, and I hope and urge Senator Reid and the Democrats who still run this place to give us a chance to have a vote on this. I think we could pass it if we did."

HOUSE COMMITTEES ADVANCE ANTI-TRAFFICKING BILLS

On Wednesday April 30 the House Judiciary Committee voted to advance three human trafficking bills to the full House. The Committee advanced Rep. Ted Poe's Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (H.R. 3530) by voice vote. This comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation authorizes the Department of Justice to award \$25 million in grants over five years to bolster services for child trafficking victims and enhance law enforcement resources to combat human trafficking. The Committee also advanced Rep. Eric Paulsen's Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act (H.R. 3610) by voice vote. This legislation would require each state to enact safe harbor legislation that treats minors engaged in commercial sex trafficking as victims rather than as criminals or delinquents. The legislation would authorize the Department of Justice to give preferential treatment to states with safe harbor laws when distributing community policing grant funds. The Judiciary Committee also voted 24-3 to approve Rep. Ann Wagner's Stop Advertising Victims of Exploitation (SAVE) Act (H.R. 4225), which aims to curb online advertisements offering the commercial sexual exploitation of minors and trafficking victims.

The House Ways and Means Committee voted the previous day to advance Rep. David Reichert's Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster

Care Act (H.R. 4058). This legislation would require states to take measures to identify, prevent, and address sex trafficking of youth in foster care. The actions taken by the House Ways and Means Committee and House Judiciary Committee are part of a broader effort in the House to pass human trafficking legislation; in a memorandum to House Republican lawmakers sent on April 25, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor said the House would take action on human trafficking bills in May as part of its legislative agenda for the spring.

(Summary provided by the Greenberg Traurig Federal Lobbying Team)

REP ROS-LEHTINEN: NARCO-TRAFFICKING IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE CORRUPTS GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THREATENS U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, made the following statement at a Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee hearing on the transnational drug trade in Latin America. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

“Recently we heard the startling claim that Latin America has surpassed Africa as the world’s most violent region, accounting for about one-third of all global homicides. And we must recognize this as one of the many alarming symptoms of a booming transnational drug trade that is the enemy of security, good governance, and democratic principles. This is a particularly pernicious issue in Central America and the Caribbean.

An example of a proactive approach to the rise in drug trafficking activity in the Caribbean is the partnership of INL and PortMiami, a major hub for travel and trade in the region. Through this initiative, PortMiami personnel provide training in anti-crime and port security matters to their Caribbean counterparts. But this is just the beginning.

The Administration must put more resources into similarly targeted programs and show that it is serious about combating the illicit drug trade by doing so. The Administration’s problem in Latin America is its failure to address the immediate needs of the region, which affect our national security interests.

General Kelly, your written testimony states “Insufficient maritime surface vessels and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms impair our primary mission to detect threats and defend the southern approaches to the U.S. homeland.”

That is why last year, I offered an amendment to the NDAA to rectify this impediment and fix this issue. I intend to offer a similar amendment again this year because we should not abandon the Western Hemisphere, and engagement is the key with our democratic allies.

With that in mind, what setbacks have we suffered due to the fact that our engagement with Honduras has been limited due to obstacles from the Senate? Has the positive progress of Operation Martillo evaporated due to the lapse of counter narcotics efforts?

General Kelly – you also mentioned in your written testimony that legislative restrictions such as the prohibition of FMF funding with the Guatemalans limits our engagement. It's my understanding that there is also a DoD policy that prevents SOUTHCOM from utilizing to the maximum extent possible our assets in JTF-Bravo in Honduras for counter narcotics operations. Has this policy hindered our ability to make a larger dent in efforts to fight drug trafficking?

These efforts are critical not only because they threaten our security and that of our allies, but because the illegal drug trade in this Hemisphere affects our national security interests throughout the world. Foreign Terrorist Organizations such as Hezbollah and the FARC engage in these illicit activities and fund their operations and advance the dangerous ambitions of regimes like that of Iran, which as we've seen, is expanding its presence in the Western Hemisphere. Drugs equals terrorism financing.

And lastly, I would like to raise an issue with the Coast Guard. My office has received information that the Coast Guard, with the help from the State Department, traveled to Cuba and is seeking to reach an understanding with a state sponsor of terrorism on counter narcotics efforts.

This is an insult and appalling that the Coast Guard wishes to have closer ties with the Cuban regime. This is the same tyranny that harbors drug traffickers, jails American citizens, supports terrorism and was caught red handed trying to smuggle military equipment to North Korea, and provides safe haven for American fugitives.

I share your concern with the rise of drug trafficking through the Caribbean but doing business with the Cuban regime is not the solution, because they are part of the problem.”

Rep. Diaz-Balart: HB 851 Allows Young Men & Women to Reach God-Given Potential

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart released the following statement in response to the passage of HB 851, the Postsecondary Student Tuition bill, by the Florida State Legislature.

“I commend and congratulate the Florida Legislature for passing this important piece of legislation. One of the things that defines the United States is that we

are a meritocracy – we judge people not by the actions of their relatives, but by their individual merits. This bill allows young men and women who have done everything society has asked of them to seek a degree of higher education and reach their God-given potential. I thank Speaker Weatherford, Senator Latvala, Representative Nuñez, Governor Scott, and the entire South Florida State Legislature delegation for their leadership on this issue.”

Congressman Joe Garcia released the following statement in response to the passage of HB 851, the Postsecondary Student Tuition bill, by the Florida State Legislature.

“Thousands of undocumented students across the state consider Florida home, and after more than a decade of stalled action in bringing forth an in-state tuition bill, I am pleased to see our Florida legislature make this a priority. These children brought to this state from other countries by their parents, have worked hard to be able to earn a higher education and contribute to society. The passage of HB 851 gives them the hope and opportunity they deserve for access to affordable higher education they otherwise wouldn’t be able to obtain.”

REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ STATEMENT ON HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz issued the following Holocaust Remembrance Day statement, known as Yom HaShoah in Hebrew, today:

“Almost 70 years ago, the worst genocide in modern human history was exposed to the global public, and the murder of six million Jews and other political, religious, and social minorities was forever seared into the collective memory of humankind. In the face of such an unimaginable tragedy, many individuals, including myself, have vowed to not only never allow something so heinous to occur again – we promised to never let the spirit of those victims fade from our hearts and from our minds.

“It is in that vein that I have personally and professionally dedicated myself to issues such as providing Holocaust survivors with adequate financial and social services so that they may live in dignity, the dignity that was nearly stolen from them decades ago. As a Jew, a policymaker, and a representative of one of the largest survivor populations in the United States, I have undertaken such issues with pride and humility.

“This week is a particularly moving one as we engage in the National Remembrance Days here at the U.S. Capitol, and look forward to the planting of a sapling from the horse chestnut tree that was visible to Anne Frank and which she wrote so poignantly about in her diary while in hiding. Such a meaningful ceremony is particularly fitting in light of this year’s Remembrance Days theme:

Confronting the Holocaust: American Responses. What better way to further our American response than by planting a sapling that inspired her during her darkest days at the seat of our democracy? The tree will remind Members, staff, and the millions of annual visitors to the Capitol that life, liberty, and freedom from persecution are enduring ideals of our common humanity that will never cease fighting for and protecting.”

REP. DIAZ-BALART, SPONSOR OF THE SAFE BUILDING CODE INCENTIVE ACT, PARTICIPATES IN MEDIA CALL

On Wednesday, the BuildStrong Coalition hosted a conference call to brief journalists on the latest developments surrounding bipartisan efforts in Congress to mitigate the costs of natural disasters by promoting the adoption of strong building codes.

Mr. Jimi Grande, the chairman of the BuildStrong Coalition and the Senior Vice President of Federal and Political Affairs at the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies and Mr. Bill Jenaway, President of the Congressional Fire Services Institute, was joined on the media call by Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. Congressman Diaz-Balart is the sponsor of The Safe Building Code Incentive Act, which would provide states that adopt and enforce model-building codes with additional disaster relief assistance.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, there have been 151 major weather-related natural disasters since 1980 that have reached or exceeded \$1 billion in economic damages. The cumulative cost of these catastrophes exceeds \$1 trillion.

On the media conference call, Mr. Grande, Mr. Jenaway and Congressman Diaz-Balart discussed the vital contributions that modern building science can play in making homes and businesses more resilient to natural disasters.

REP. WILSON AND REP. CONYERS PRESENT “GIRL RISING” A SCREENING ON STEM EDUCATION IN HAITI

Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson and Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) held a screening of the acclaimed documentary “Girl Rising” and a panel discussion on science, technology, engineering, and math, (STEM) education, as a driver of economic development in Haiti on Wednesday. Congresswoman Wilson and Congressman Conyers are members of the Congressional Black Caucus Haiti Taskforce.

Panelists included Malika Saada Saar, Director of the Human Rights Project for Girls and Special Counsel on Human Rights to The Raben Group, Michel DeGraff, Professor of Linguistics at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) and Tara Abrahams, Deputy Director at the Girl Rising Campaign Team.

LOOKING AHEAD

May 5 – May 9, 2014:

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

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