

WEEKLY WASHINGTON JANUARY 10TH – JANUARY 14TH, 2011

Below is an informal overview of the Weekly Washington activities of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

PORT OF MIAMI

Port of Miami Director Bill Johnson and OIA held meetings this week in Washington, DC to discuss The Deep Dredge. We met with United States Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke as well as Rock Salt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and staffers from the US Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations. We also met with Congresswoman Frederica Wilson's chief of staff Tasha Cole and Senior Staffer on the House Energy and Water Appropriations Committee Taunja Berquam and asked for their continued assistance to include the Port's Deep Dredge into the President's budget for next year. During the meetings we educated staff and officials on the national significance of the Deep Dredge and the impact to Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida and the country in terms of economic wealth and creating jobs.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY WEATHER DAMAGE

OIA met Miami-Dade County's Agricultural Manager Charles LaPradd on Friday to discuss plans to work in conjunction with the Miami-Dade County Congressional delegation to secure a letter of support to United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to include Miami-Dade County to a statewide national catastrophe declaration. The letter and request for the declaration comes in response to the weather damage inflicted on several agriculture sites over the last few weeks due to the recent drop in temperature inflicted on South Florida.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION DRAFT AUDIT REPORT TO MIAMI-DADE TRANSIT

The Miami-Dade County Congressional delegation all received a copy of a memorandum from County Manager George Burgess that was sent to the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners on the draft Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Financial Management Oversight (FMO) audit report. The audit report was released to Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) last Friday. The FTA requested two Internal Control Environment audit reviews that focused on procedures in managing grants and other fiscal transactions including those related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

With Republicans gaining control of the House, committee chairmanships and membership will change significantly in the this Congress. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen will chair the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the 112th Congress and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart will sit on the House Committee on Appropriations. The House Democratic Steering Committee still needs to ratify committee assignments before they are released to the general public. As a result, it is still not know where Congresswomen Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Frederica Wilson will sit

during the coming term. Republican Rep. David Rivera has yet to be assigned a committee. In the Senate, Sen. Bill Nelson continues to sit on the Select Committee on Intelligence, Special Committee on Aging, Committee on Armed Services, Committee on the Budget, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and Committee on Finance. Newly elected Sen. Marco Rubio has not yet received his committee assignments.

OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement Director Michael Bromwich, the Obama administration's lead enforcer of offshore oil and gas drilling, said that he expects deep-water drilling permits to begin being issued again by the end of June. The seven-member National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, co-chaired by former Florida Senator Bob Graham, finished examining the events that led to the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig and subsequent spill. The report outlines causes and consequences of the explosion and offered a set of unanimous recommendations for preventing similar events from occurring in the future. Among the recommendations is that Congress create an independent safety agency within the Interior Department that would be headed by someone appointed to a fixed term. There has been pressure on the administration and the Interior Department to issue drilling permits following a five-month ban in response to the April 20th accident in the Gulf of Mexico. The Department released a series of industry standards for drilling that included well design, casing, cementing, control equipment like blowout preventers and new workplace safety guidelines.

HEALTH CARE REPEAL VOTE

According to Majority Leader Eric Cantor, the House will attempt to repeal the health care reform legislation with a two-day debate beginning Tuesday evening and ending Wednesday evening. The bill's passage will send the measure to the Senate were its expected that no action will take place as Democrats currently control the chamber. Republicans had planned to debate and vote on repeal this week but this action was postponed in response to the events of this past weekend in Arizona.

NASA FUNDING ISSUES

Senator Bill Nelson announced that he would introduce legislation aimed at repealing a provision in the FY2010 omnibus spending bill that has handcuffed NASA's ability to operate and help fix their financial problems. Despite an agreement by NASA and Congress to discontinue the Constellation program, the space agency continues to spend \$200 million a month on the program. The president's FY 2011 budget request altered NASA's focus from the Constellation program to one that calls for the development of a crew capsule and a heavy-lift vehicle in addition to the use of commercial carriers for spaceflight. The issue is that the Constellation contracts are limited by the fact that there is no enacted appropriations language for fiscal 2011 that supersedes the prohibition in the fiscal 2010 omnibus. According to a report released by NASA, they do not have enough money to currently get a capsule and heavy-lift vehicle ready by the mandated deadline.

CONGRESSIONAL CALENDAR

January 15th – Republican Policy Retreat
January 17th – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 25th – Senate returns from recess
January 25th – State of the Union address