

WEEKLY WASHINGTON JULY 18TH THROUGH JULY 22ND, 2011

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

THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

DEBT DEBATE DOMINATES CAPITOL HILL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

President Obama, Speaker Boehner and the rest of Capitol Hill continue to grapple with a potential deal to raise the U.S. debt ceiling before the U.S. Treasury imposed deadline, which is now just 11 days away. Reports surfaced late Friday that the Speaker and President were close to finalizing a deal that could include up to \$3 trillion in spending cuts over the next 10 years, while leaving major tax reform and revenue issues for a later date. Many economists predict that a failure to reach a deal could result in an unprecedented national default that would trigger a double dip recession and cause chaos for the global financial markets.

MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AEROSPACE SHOW

OIA continues to work with the Beacon Council in its efforts to secure federal approval to host the Miami International Aerospace Show (MIAS).

Last month, a letter organized by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley, was signed by all 27 members of Florida's Congressional Delegation. The letter expressed strong support for the efforts of the County and Beacon Council to host the event, which would be held at the Homestead Air Reserve Base. This week, the Beacon Council was informed that a formal response to the delegation letter and the Council's application for approval would be forthcoming.

OIA, the Beacon Council, Gov. Scott's Washington DC Office and the congressional delegation, have worked together to support the Beacon Council's strong efforts.

MAYOR GIMENEZ UPDATES CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION ON FTA FUNDING

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez sent a letter to the county's Congressional delegation this week to announce that a notice of allocation of funds was received from the Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The FTA informed the county that Miami-Dade Transit's (MDT) standard operating procedures for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) reimbursement was approved and represents \$72.6 million. OIA hand delivered hard copies of the letter to each member of the county's Congressional delegation.

HOUSE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE PASSES AUTHORIZATION BILL

Led by Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the House Foreign Relations Committee passed H.R. 2583, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of FY 2012 on Thursday. The legislation seeks to cut spending, mandate foreign aid reform, and enhance security for the United States and its allies. The main provisions of the bill focus on democracy promotion, security for Israel and restricting foreign aid to certain nations in the Middle East and Latin America. For example, the proposal would “block security assistance to Egypt, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority and Yemen, as well as all assistance to Pakistan, unless those countries meet certain conditions related to combating terrorism.” The bill contains legislative priorities that Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen has been a leader on, including amending the Peace Corps Act to require more safety protections for corps volunteers, and a modification to the Export Administration Act.

REP. RIVERA SCORES VICTORY WITH CUBA TRAVEL POLICY AMENDMENT

Rep. David Rivera sponsored an amendment in the House Foreign Affairs Committee to repeal President Obama’s lifting of travel restrictions to Cuba. The amendment was included in the above mentioned Foreign Relations Authorization Act for the 2012 fiscal year. Regulations include limiting visits to Cuba to once every three years. The amendment had bipartisan support and passed by a vote of 36-6. Rep. Rivera said in a statement, “We understand that we must not reward a regime that has been designated as a state sponsor of terrorism by our government, has held an American citizen hostage for more than 18 months, has no regard for the human rights of its own people and has refused to allow freedom and democratic reforms.” The Congressman goes on to say, “We must require change and reforms from the Castro dictatorship in regards to human rights and free and open democratic elections before pursuing policies that only serve to enrich the Castro dictatorship. “

NELSON AND RUBIO WORKING TOGETHER ON GULF COAST RESTORATION

Senators Nelson and Rubio joined a bipartisan group of senators to introduce the RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 which will establish the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. The fund will be made up of 80% of all civil penalties paid by BP or any other responsible party in connection with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. “We badly need this investment in our Gulf Coast,” Sen. Bill Nelson said. “And it makes sense, because that’s where the BP oil spill painted beaches and wetlands black and messed up the fishing and tourism industries.” “Last year’s Gulf oil spill devastated Florida’s tourism, fisheries and other related industries, and this legislation represents an important step to restore the economies and ecosystems in the Gulf,” Sen. Rubio said. “Redirecting the fine money paid by BP under the Clean Water Act is a logical policy that will help the states affected by this disaster continue rebuilding their businesses and lives.” Aside from the 80% payments, the bill will invest in the long-term health of the coastal ecosystem and its economies.

The legislation is cosponsored by Senators Mary Landrieu (LA), Richard Shelby (AL), David Vitter (LA), Jeff Sessions (AL), Thad Cochran (MS), Roger Wicker (MS), and Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX). Sen. Barbara Boxer, Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, also worked on the legislation and has committed to taking it up in her committee as soon as possible.

The bill will do the following:

1. Dedicate 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties charged to BP to the restoration of the Gulf Coast
2. Provide needed resources to Gulf Coast States to start recovery immediately
3. Establish a Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and a Comprehensive Plan for the Gulf Coast
4. Establish a Long Term Science and Fisheries Endowment and Gulf Coast Centers of Excellence

According to a press release from the group of senators, “The Clean Water Act allows the Environmental Protection Agency to collect \$1,100 per barrel of oil spilled, or \$4,300 per barrel if there is a finding of gross negligence, from any party found responsible for an oil spill in federal waters. Based on the estimated 4.9 million barrels of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico, BP could face fines between \$5.4 billion and \$21.1 billion. Under current law, this money would go to the U.S. Treasury and the Gulf Coast would get nothing.”

DIAZ-BALART - CHAIRMAN OF CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CONFERENCE

Last week, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart was named as Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Conference (CHC). The CHC was founded in 2003 and seeks to promote policy outcomes that are important to the Hispanic and Portuguese communities. Rep. Francisco "Quico" Canseco (TX) was named as vice chairman. Other members of the CHC include Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Devin Nunes, (CA), Bill Flores (TX), David Rivera and Jaime Herrera-Beutler (WA).

FLORIDA ELECTEDS HONORED WITH NATIONAL PARKS AWARD

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) named Sen. Bill Nelson and Reps. Corrine Brown, Kathy Castor, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, and Alcee Hastings, as a Friend of the National Parks award from the nonpartisan NPCA for their contributions to protecting and enhancing America's national parks. The award was presented to 236 members of Congress on June 21st in recognition of their pro-park voting records during the 111th Congress.

PORT OF MIAMI DEEP DREDGE

OIA continues to work with Miami Seaport and Director Bill Johnson to obtain the necessary federal approvals for the next phase of the Deep Dredge Project, a construction advanced funds agreement. Last week, Director Johnson met with Sally Ericsson from the Office of Management and Budget in Sen. Nelson's office. OIA continues to work with the Florida Congressional Delegation, key members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the Obama Administration, to complete this phase of the Port of Miami's deep dredge project.

OIA CONTINUES TO MONITOR LEGISLATION CONTAINING VITAL LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING

Last week, the full House Appropriations Committee marked up the FY2012 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill. The bill makes significant cuts to local state and law enforcement programs. The bill provides no funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program or the State Criminal Alien Assistance program (SCAAP).

SCAAP provides money to the State and County for the cost of incarcerating undocumented immigrants who have committed crimes. Full funding for SCAAP was a priority for the County's Corrections Department this year. An amendment was offered to add money for SCAAP but it was withdrawn. At the markup, the CJS Subcommittee Chairman Frank Wolf committed to try and add money back for the SCAAP program later in the legislative process

Several amendments were offered to add funding for the COPS program as well, but those attempts failed. Again, Subcommittee Chairman Wolf committed to trying to allocate funding for the COPS Program later in the process. Because both SCAAP and COPS are popular programs, it is expected that when the bill goes to the House floor attempts will be made to add money for them. Funding could also be added for the programs when the CJS bill goes to conference with the Senate.

These programs are a major priority for the County. OIA will continue to work with MDPD, the delegation and our federal lobbying team to ensure that these vital law enforcement programs receive adequate funding.

CLIMATE COMMUNITIES WEEKLY CALL

This week's Climate Communities Seminar focused on making clean local energy accessible to states and local governments. On Wednesday, July 20, 2011, Rep. Nan Hayworth (NY), Dan Lungren (CA) and Mike Thompson (CA) introduced the bi-partisan PACE Assessment Protection Act of 2011 (H.R. 2599). If enacted, this legislation will restore the rights of states and local governments to establish Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs. The Clean Coalition has published a CLEAN (Clean Local Energy Accessible Now) guide in order to help communities and local utilities evaluate, design and enact programs based on global best practices and the expertise developed by the Clean Coalition through their work on designing and advocating for CLEAN programs throughout the United States.

The CLEAN programs work by creating a stable market for clean local energy through local renewable energy projects that connect local distribution grids together and harnesses their energy, which is then sold to local utilities for use. CLEAN programs bring the economic benefits of energy production to local communities by producing jobs (more so than fossil fuel or nuclear energy industries), and keep energy dollars in the community. For example, a UC Berkeley study found that a CLEAN program tailored for California would stimulate three times more jobs, \$50 billion in additional private investment, and \$1.7 billion in additional state revenues. CLEAN programs also maximize the productivity of underutilized spaces (e.g., brownfields, parking lots, rooftops, agricultural land, etc.).

To download the CLEAN Program Guide, visit: www.clean-coalition.org/local-action

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES FOR 2012 PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

This week, former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer announced that he would throw his hat into the ring and run in the already crowded GOP presidential primary. Here is a list of candidates who have announced they will run, and some other potential candidates.

OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED WILL RUN:

Michele Bachmann – Minnesota Congresswoman
Herman Cain – former CEO of Godfather’s Pizza
Newt Gingrich – former Speaker of the House
Jon Huntsman – former Gov. of Utah & former Ambassador to China
Gary Johnson – former Gov. of New Hampshire
Ron Paul – Texas Congressman
Tim Pawlenty – former Gov. of Minnesota
Buddy Roemer – former Gov. of Louisiana
Mitt Romney – former Gov. of Massachusetts
Rick Santorum – former Sen. from Pennsylvania
Thaddeus McCotter – Michigan Congressman

YET TO OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE:

Rudy Giuliani – former Mayor of New York City
Sarah Palin – former Gov. of Alaska
Rick Perry – Gov. of Texas

NEXT WEEK’S CALENDAR: JULY 25 – JULY 29

The House & Senate will be in session.