

WEEKLY WASHINGTON MAY 31ST THROUGH JUNE 3RD, 2011

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

THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

THE SENATE WAS IN RECESS ALL WEEK

MAJOR FUNDING VICTORY FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

On Thursday, OIA scored a major victory on behalf of the County after an amendment was successfully attached to the FY 2012 House Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill. The amendment stripped language from the bill that would have restricted funding for the Urban Area Security Initiative to only ten urban areas throughout the country. The entire Miami-Dade County Congressional Delegation strongly supported the amendment.

On May 18, Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Chairman Joe Martinez joined mayors from throughout the country, including Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado, in a letter to U.S. House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (KY) which strongly opposed the restrictive language. Currently, Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami receive funding under this program; however, under the provisions of the House bill, they would have been removed from the funding list.

Prior to the vote, OIA and the County's federal contract lobbyists worked with a broad coalition of cities and counties throughout Florida and the nation to advocate on behalf of the amendment.

NELSON, RUBIO PEN LETTER TO CHAIRMAN MARTINEZ & BEACON COUNCIL

OIA and Beacon Council coordinated to secure a joint letter from Senators Nelson and Rubio to Board of County Commissioners Chairman Joe Martinez and Beacon Council President Frank Nero. The letter expressed strong support for the proposed Miami International Aerospace Show (MIAS). The purpose of the letter is to provide a strong bi-partisan endorsement for the show and to assist the County and the Beacon Council in its efforts to attract potential vendors and sponsors for MIAS.

MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY

OIA continues to work with the Miami-Dade County Congressional delegation regarding funding discrepancies with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. At issue are provisions within the FY 2009 THUD Appropriations Act which required HUD to rescind \$750 million in unspent Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) funds from 2400 public housing authorities. MDPHA has recently discovered that the \$43 million recaptured from MDPHA at that time, was the second largest recapture amount of the top ten programs experiencing recapture in the country and was, by far, disproportionate in relation to the size of the other

PHA's respective HCV programs. Director Gregg Fortner, OIA and the federal lobbying team will continue to seek an acceptable response and resolution from HUD.

FEMA PREPARED FOR HURRICANE SEASON

As June 1 marked the official start of hurricane season, FEMA has been coordinating with coastal states as they prepare for hurricane season and work closely with its federal, state, local and tribal partners, the private sector, voluntary organizations and the entire emergency management team. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, along with other partners, briefed President Obama on the federal government's preparations for the upcoming season.

“Recent events including the deadly tornadoes in the central U.S. and southeast, flooding along the Mississippi and other emergencies serve as a reminder that we should be prepared to address all hazards, including hurricanes,” said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. “Everyone needs to be prepared, not just those in hurricane prone states, but also areas well inland. This means having an emergency plan, storing an emergency kit and staying informed of alerts or messages from local emergency officials.”

PORT OF MIAMI DEEP DREDGE

OIA continues to work with the Florida Congressional Delegation, key members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the Obama Administration, in preparation for the next phase of the Port of Miami's deep dredge project, which will require a construction advanced funds agreement to be cleared by Congress and the Administration. OIA is coordinating meetings on behalf of the County over the next few weeks, to discuss the next phase and ensure expedited consideration and approval of this important project.

NEW COMMERCE SECRETARY HELD UP BY STALLED TRADE DEALS

President Obama will nominate John Bryson as Secretary to the Commerce Department. Bryson would replace Gary Locke, who will become the next U.S. ambassador to China. Bryson is the retired chairman and CEO of Edison International in 2008 after 18 years. He also served in the first administration of Gov. Jerry Brown (CA).

Republicans in both the House and Senate have voiced their displeasure with the nomination and have stated that they will block the nomination until the President sends to Congress, the already negotiated trade deals with Colombia, Panama and South Korea.

OIA continues to convey the County's strongest support for passage of the Colombian and Panama measures.

REP. RIVERA SENDS LETTER TO SEC. GEITHNER, URGING ACTION

Rep. David Rivera sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) Acting Director Edward DeMarco regarding the state of the Florida housing market, and recommending action that Treasury and FHFA can take to improve the Florida housing market.

The letter suggests that Treasury and FHFA direct GSEs (Government Sponsored Enterprises) to: (1) Create an electronic marketplace for distressed properties in Florida by September 1, 2011. (2) Aggregate distressed GSE inventory where short sales are calculated to represent the best option for investors and a dignified exit for homeowners who will not qualify for government or servicer loan modification programs. (3) Employ a pre-approved price model as the floor that the GSEs are willing to accept in a short sale transaction. (4) Ensure that Florida's licensed real estate professionals are enlisted to support buyers and sellers. (5) Encourage Home Affordable Foreclosure Alternatives Program (HAFA) servicers to market their Florida short sales through this electronic market place. (6) Adopt a consistent and timely electronic process for valuing residential properties based on current local market condition. (7) Extend the electronic market place to auction Real Estate Owned (REO) inventory for all cash transactions that will allow Florida's markets to clear more rapidly.

CLIMATE COMMUNITIES CALL

This week's Climate Control call focused on encouraging local governments to focus on retrofitting measures for water and waste water management systems, as a means of cost and energy reduction. Building retrofitting, street light restructuring, and water management re-engineering were mentioned as a few of the many steps that local governments can take in order to decrease energy costs. During the call, best practice initiatives were shared and the city of Rome, NY was discussed as a successful case study, in which the Energy Savings Performance Contract that the city was awarded generated thousands of dollars in savings for their waste water management budget. Energy cost savings achieved city-wide amounted to \$788,343, which exceeded the amount that project forecasting guaranteed. Rome, NY also saw a revenue increase of \$180,000 in the first year of implementation.

Also discussed were the many approaches that local governments can take to generate clean energy, which include, but are not limited to: digester gas (digestion of sludge/waste water solids), geothermal energy (by-product from the treatment of wastewater), hydro power (falling water), and wind turbines.

One hundred communities will be on Capitol Hill from June 15-17, 2011, for the Local Government Clean Energy Leadership Summit, in an effort to implement federal policies and secure federal funding that will advance energy reduction projects for water and waste water management facilities. This conference is a major energy efficiency and renewable energy gathering for local government sectors, and will demonstrate the success rate of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG), and other federal investments in local clean energy projects.

2012 PRESIDENTIAL

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney announced that he will seek the Republican nomination for President in 2012. He joins former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who retired from Congress in 1999, Rep. Ron Paul, former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty and Herman Cain, former CEO of Godfather's Pizza. Former Governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin along with Rep. Michele Bachman, Amb. John Huntsman, and former Senator Rick Santorum are all expected to join the race in the coming weeks.

NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: JUNE 6 – JUNE 10

The House will be in recess.

The Senate will be in session.