

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

November 7TH – November 11TH, 2011

Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:

THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK

MEETING WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE WILLIAM BROWNFIELD

On Tuesday, Chairman Martinez and Mayor Gimenez met with Ambassador William Brownfield, the Assistant Secretary of State who heads up the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Ambassador Brownfield visited Miami to participate in the Central America and Caribbean Chiefs of Mission Conference with U.S. Southern Command. The meeting included discussion of INL's mission and brainstorming of potential opportunities for cooperation and partnership between the County and INL. INL is the U.S. State Department entity responsible for formulating policies and developing programs to combat criminal activity throughout the world. OIA and House Foreign Relations Committee Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen's committee staff coordinated the meetings. Assistant Secretary Brownfield also traveled to police headquarters and met with MDPD Asst. Dir. Patterson and top law enforcement officials from the department.

3% WITHHOLDING REPEAL PASSES THE SENATE

On Thursday evening the Senate passed H.R. 674, a bill to repeal the 3% withholding tax on certain federal contractors, by a vote of 95 – 0, with Senators Nelson and Rubio joining the 95 Senators in passing the legislation. The bill included an amendment offered by Sen. Jon Tester (MT) that provides employers with tax incentives to hire unemployed veterans (VOW to Hire Heroes). The House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 674 last week. The modified bill now heads back to the House, where it is expected to easily pass and then signed into law by the President.

A large coalition of local governments and small businesses has long advocated for the this legislation that would repeal a section of the federal tax code requiring State and Local governments that expend more than \$100 million per year in outside contracts to withhold three percent of all payments for goods and services, remit that to the IRS, and adhere to new reporting requirements.

Commissioner Sally Heyman has been a leading advocate in support of the bill and the County strongly supports passage of a 3% withholding measure. OIA, along with

Commissioner Heyman, Director Miriam Singer and the Federal Lobbying Team continue to work to help secure the bill's passage.

REPS. ROS-LEHTINEN AND WASSERMAN SHULTZ DELIVER LETTER IN SUPPORT OF MIAMI AIR SHOW TO WHITE HOUSE

The Miami-Dade County Congressional delegation submitted a letter of support on behalf of the Miami International Aerospace Show (MIAS) to President Obama earlier this week. The effort to get this important letter of support to the President was led by Reps. Ros-Lehtinen and Wasserman Schultz and signed by Reps. Diaz-Balart, Wilson and Rivera. Wasserman Schultz will follow up on the letter with a phone call to the Air Force Secretary next week. The letter states:

“As members of the South Florida Congressional delegation, we request your support for the proposed MIAS, a project that will spur significant economic growth and create much needed jobs in South Florida while requiring no federal dollars. All that is needed is the approval of your Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Donley. The proposed MIAS at Homestead Air Reserve Base (HARB) offers a rare opportunity: it would encourage private sector job creation and serve as a catalyst for economic recovery while providing the Federal government with capital investment at and around a federal installation at no Federal cost.”

The letter of support was hand delivered to the White House by Rep. Wasserman Shultz's office. The Beacon Council, OIA and the Federal lobbying team will continue to advocate with the county's congressional delegation in support of MIAS.

SEN. RUBIO COMMENTS ON IAEA REPORT ON IRAN

Following this week's meeting of the Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence, Sen. Rubio issued the following statement regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report about Iran's nuclear weapons program:

“This report is another example of how the Iranian government subverts the international community by concealing their nuclear activity. Congress should approve the sanctions included in the Iran, North Korea and Syria Sanctions Act. The Obama Administration should work with our allies and partners in Europe and Asia to impose crippling sanctions on Iran, including its central bank, to finally send a message that the Iranian nuclear weapons program is intolerable. I look forward to learning more about this report and to hearing how the Administration plans to respond to it.”

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN RECEIVES OPEN LETTER FROM CUBAN DISSIDENTS - SAYS SHE WILL CONTINUE BRINGING ATTENTION TO THE SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMMITTED BY THE CASTRO DICTATORSHIP

On November 9, 2011 Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen issued a statement after receiving an open letter signed by 364 members of the peaceful Cuban dissident movement asking her to continue her efforts denouncing the increased wave of repression against them by the Castro dictatorship. A portion of the statement is below:

“The letter I received from the dissidents is a testament to the brutality of the Castro brothers and the illegal regime they lead. I will continue focusing the attention of the U.S. Congress on the grave human rights abuses committed just 90 miles from our shores and I will redouble my efforts to ensure that other responsible nations know the true barbaric nature of the Castro tyranny.”

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN CONGRATULATES MIAMI PASSPORT AGENCY DIRECTOR RYAN DOOLEY FOR BEING RECOGNIZED WITH HIGHEST STATE DEPARTMENT HONOR

On Tuesday, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen issued the following statement congratulating Ryan Dooley, Director of the Miami Passport Agency, for being recognized by the State Department with the Ambassador Mary A. Ryan Award for Outstanding Public Service:

“This is the highest honor the State Department gives and Secretary Clinton will present Director Dooley with the award during a presentation tomorrow Wednesday, November 9th at the State Department in Washington, DC. Even though I am very proud that Ryan has been recognized by the State Department with its highest honor, I am not at all surprised. Ryan is a tireless public servant who has been instrumental in improving the customer service operations at the Miami Passport Agency, from being very responsive to Congressional inquiries to opening up the office on Saturdays during peak summer travel months. I wish Ryan nothing but the best in this and in all his future endeavors because I know that he will continue making us proud of his achievements.”

REP. RIVERA FILES BILL TO BLOCK CUBA OIL DRILLING

Rep. David Rivera followed up on his letter to the White House last week by introducing the Foreign Oil Spill Liability Act of 2011.

The bill would amend the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to hold the owner or operator of a foreign offshore unit liable for cleanup and compensation costs in the event of a foreign oil spill that affects American waters and shores. Existing law requires that for any foreign oil spill reaching U.S. waters and shores, cleanup and compensation costs are paid for by the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. The trust fund cap is limited to \$1 billion per incident with a \$150 million cap within it for response. The only existing recourse is the Attorney General's authority to sue the responsible foreign party for reimbursement to the fund. Ultimately, taxpayers and affected states would be on the hook for paying the difference in cleanup and compensation costs.

If a foreign oil spill originates from a designated State Sponsor of Terrorism, that would trigger a tripling of the liability cap and penalties imposed. Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria are currently designated as State Sponsors of Terrorism.

The following statement was included in the Congressman's press release announcing the bill introduction:

"Foreign oil spills could have a detrimental effect on state and local economies, hurting American businesses and costing American jobs," Congressman Rivera said. "This bill seeks accountability from responsible foreign parties, in the event of an oil spill that affects American waters and shores, by ensuring that they pay for all cleanup and compensation costs. While the responsible party is held liable for American-sourced oil spills, there is a much lower level of responsibility for foreign-sourced spills. American taxpayers and state governments should not be footing the bill for cleanup and compensation costs from a foreign oil spill.

"This bill also seeks to implement stiffer liability and penalties on the responsible party if the oil spill originates in the waters of a State Sponsor of Terrorism. The Castro regime, that has as much regard for environmental safety as it does for human rights, seeks to drill for oil less than 90 miles off the coast of Florida, posing a direct threat to our state's environment and economy. While the White House and the U.S. Department of the Interior help facilitate this drilling, in possible violation of the embargo, I am sponsoring this important piece of legislation to ensure that Florida taxpayers are not made to pay for an environmental disaster caused by a terrorist regime," Congressman Rivera concluded.

SENATORS NELSON AND MENENDEZ JOIN EFFORT TO BLOCK CUBA OIL DRILLING

Also this week, Senators Bill Nelson and Robert Menendez (NJ) introduced a bill that would remove a \$75-million liability cap for oil spills originating in foreign waters. The bill would authorize those who suffer damages to be compensated from an Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. The legislation was spurred by the planned offshore drilling in Cuban waters by Spanish oil giant Repsol.

In a statement Senator Nelson says *"Our goal here is to hold foreign oil companies liable if they have a spill that reaches U.S. waters..."* Sen. Menendez said he hoped that *"companies seeking to drill in Cuban waters will think twice once they know they would be fully liable for any damages to the Florida Keys, South Florida beaches, or if the spill reached the Gulf Stream, anywhere up the East Coast."*

REP. WILSON URGES SUPERCOMMITTEE TO PROTECT SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE AND EDUCATION

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson sent a letter to the co-chairs of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction ("the Supercommittee") Rep. Jeb Hensarling (TX) and

Sen. Patty Murray (WA) urging the Supercommittee to protect Social Security, Medicare and education programs from possible cuts proposed by the panel.

In a statement released by the Congresswoman: *"The budget that Congress adopts reflects the principles, values and morals of this Nation; and, in that vein, I urge you to make no further cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and federal education programs, including Pell grants,"* wrote Congresswoman Wilson. *"The elderly, disabled, children and those living in poverty are my greatest concern in this deficit reduction debate. It would be acts of intransigence to have these vulnerable populations bear the brunt of an aggressive deficit reduction program."*

SENATOR RUBIO LAUNCHES IPHONE & ANDROID APPS

Earlier this week, Sen. Rubio announced the release of a full suite of mobile device applications for constituents. Rubio stated *"I am very encouraged by the level of constituent engagement we've seen this year through traditional letters and emails, but also through our constituent mailbox series, website blog, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages,"* Additionally, *"With these apps, Floridians will have even more tools to help keep them connected to our office and communicate with us."*

The new applications are available through mobile application stores and Rubio's official senate website. The new applications were developed for iPhone, iPad, and Android and offer simple access to Rubio's blog, social media feeds and latest press releases.

<http://rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2011/11/mobile-solutions-announcement>

TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL - SENATE EPW COMMITTEE MARK UP

On Wednesday, the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee marked up the highway portion of the senate's transportation reauthorization bill.

The bill (S. 1813) passed the committee 18 – 0. It would authorize about \$85 billion over two years for federal highway programs. Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (CA) offered a managers package including previously negotiated amendments offered by Senators Inhofe, Baucus, Vitter and herself. The manager's package was approved unanimously.

The manager's package contained a Boxer-Inhofe-Baucus-Vitter manager's amendment, the text of which was not immediately available, and a package of amendments submitted by other Senate EPW members, which are summarized below. The *Patton Boggs Lobbying Team* will circulate the full text of amendments included in the manager's package as they become available and OIA will continue to report to MDT as this bill works its way through the legislative process in the Senate.

Amendments in Manager's Package

- Barasso #2 as modified re NFP flexibility for rural roads
- Barrasso #4 as modified re Limit the number of performance measures
- Boozman #1 as modified re CMAQ accountability study
- Cardin #4 as modified re FHWA to FTA flex used to enhance level of service
- Carper #3 as modified re Clarify off-road diesel PM2.5 rules and funding
- Crapo #2 as modified re "Consult" not "cooperate/coordinate" with MPOs
- Crapo #3 as modified re Grandfathers statewide policy plans for 4 years
- Gillibrand #1 as modified re Freight rail improvement within 5 miles of Mex, Can borders
- Johanns #2 re State comment process on DOT standards for NHPP
- Johanns #3 re Require DOT to give tech support to states for data modeling
- Johanns #5 re Narrow scope of fines in sec. 2210 of bill
- Merkley #3 as modified re Require MPO alternate scenarios to be fiscally constrained
- Sanders #1 as modified re Increase ER fed share to 100 percent in certain circumstances
- Sanders #3 re DOT report on potential electric car charging network
- Udall #1 as modified re Define border roads as within 10 miles of border
- Udall #2 re Use of crash rate as a safety analysis/planning factor
- Udall #3 re Eligibility for alternate roads along a corridor when more cost effective than improving primary route

CLIMATE COMMUNITIES

On Thursday, Climate Communities held their weekly webinar. This week the webinar, titled, Partnering with Colleges and Universities on Local Sustainability Initiatives, focused on local government leaders from across the country who have pledged to reduce energy use, curb greenhouse gas emissions and act more sustainably through collaboration with college and university leaders in their communities. Many times, local government and higher education leaders don't realize the opportunities that exist to collaborate and work together on shared sustainability goals.

Peter Bardaglio, a Senior Fellow at Second Nature, presented three case studies of communities and institutions of higher learning that have developed successful partnerships to pursue mutual sustainability goals. According to Climate Communities, "By focusing on common ground, communities and campuses have been able to leverage their energy and climate commitments and develop innovative strategies that take advantage of the synergies that exist between local governments, colleges and universities. The case studies will showcase town-gown sustainability efforts in Ithaca, NY; Oberlin, OH; and Grand Rapids, MI."

GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD 2012

Michele Bachmann – U.S. Rep. from Minnesota
 Herman Cain – former CEO of Godfather's Pizza

Newt Gingrich – former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
Jon Huntsman – former Gov. of Utah & former Ambassador to China
Gary Johnson – former Gov. of New Hampshire
Ron Paul – U.S. Rep. from Texas
Rick Perry – Gov. of Texas
Buddy Roemer – former Gov. of Louisiana*
Mitt Romney – former Gov. of Massachusetts
Rick Santorum – former Sen. from Pennsylvania

*(*will not be on FL primary ballot)*

FEDERAL LOBBYIST REPORTS

Please use the following link to access the monthly lobbyist reports for the Washington D.C. lobbying team http://www.miamidade.gov/intergov/federal_lobbyist.asp

NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: NOVEMBER 14TH – NOVEMBER 18TH

The House will be in session next week

The Senate will be in session next week