

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

### **October 24TH – October 28TH, 2011**

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

*THE SENATE WAS IN RECESS THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **3% WITHHOLDING BILL – PASSES HOUSE, HEADS BACK TO SENATE**

On Thursday, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 674, a bill to repeal the 3% withholding requirement, by an overwhelming bipartisan margin of 405 to 16. The entire Florida congressional delegation supported the bill.

A related piece of legislation (H.R. 2576), which would offset the lost revenue, also passed by a vote of 262-157. The two measures were combined and sent to the Senate for consideration. H.R. 2576 is controversial to some members because it would adjust the income qualifications for purposes of determining eligibility for certain healthcare-related programs, such as Medicaid. Both the repeal and the “pay-for” have received the endorsement of the Obama Administration.

Senator Scott Brown (MA), the sponsor of the Senate version of the 3% withholding bill, plans to hold a press conference next week on Tuesday, November 1. The purpose of the press conference will be to generate public awareness and support in the Senate given that the body rejected a similar bill last week before adjourning for recess.

Last week the Senate took up Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s version of the 3% withholding bill and in a procedural motion (i.e. cloture vote) to close debate on the bill, the Senate voted 57 to 43 to reject the motion, effectively stalling the measure in the upper chamber. Importantly, the motion did include votes in favor of the measure by Senators Marco Rubio, Bill Nelson and nine other Democratic Senators. The President threatened a veto of McConnell’s bill because it contained a \$30 billion rescission that the White House said would “cause serious disruption in a range of services supported by the federal government.”

Since the Senate was out of session this week and the chamber’s legislative calendar is currently packed with FY12 appropriations bills, Majority Leader Reid has set no definitive timeline for the bill to be considered. It will be important to gauge how the Senate reacts to the House’s “pay-for” provisions in the bill, considering that the original “pay-for” is what doomed the measure last week.

Commissioner Sally Heyman has been a strong advocate 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. Additionally, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Government Withholding Coalition and NACo continue to coordinate lobbying efforts to gain support for final passage of the legislation.

## **PHCD DIRECTOR FORTNER MEETS WITH HUD OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER ISSUES**

Director of Public Housing and Community Development Gregg Fortner was in Washington on Thursday. The purpose of the trip was to meet with U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials and discuss a resolution to the ongoing issue regarding \$43 million in recaptured Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) funds while the department was in HUD receivership.

OIA has been working with Rep. Diaz-Balart's office and the rest of the county delegation regarding the recaptured funding discrepancies. At issue are provisions within the FY 2009 THUD Appropriations Act which required HUD to rescind \$750 million in unspent HCV funds from 2400 public housing authorities. The amount taken from the County's public housing authority was the second largest recapture amount of the top ten programs experiencing recapture in the country and substantially disproportionate when compared to similar public housing agencies.

In May, Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Chairman Joe Martinez sent a letter to HUD requesting corrective action and an explanation for the disproportionate recapture amount. HUD's response letter did not provide an explanation regarding the recapture amount, nor did it indicate the agency would take corrective action to address this inequitable treatment. On June 16, Chairman Martinez again sent a letter to HUD, requesting an adequate explanation regarding HUD's calculation of the recapture amount and lack of corrective action. Two weeks ago, Commissioner Lynda Bell, Director Fortner and OIA discussed the issue and the County's position with HUD officials in Washington.

## **DEFICIT REDUCTION SUPERCOMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS - UPDATE (PREPARED BY PATTON BOGGS)**

### SUMMARY

On Wednesday, October 26, the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (Joint Select Committee/Super Committee) held its third public hearing entitled "Discretionary Outlays, Security and Non-Security." The Committee's fourth public session examined non-mandatory government spending with Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Director Douglas Elmendorf serving as the only witness.

The hearing focused on discretionary spending, which accounts for about one-third of the federal budget and is subject to annual Congressional appropriations. Discretionary spending includes defense, education, disaster relief and foreign aid and has been the target of recent budget cuts. Mandatory spending, including outlays for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, makes up most of the remaining two-thirds of the budget.

Director Elmendorf stressed that because discretionary spending is determined by the appropriation process each year, it is not always clear as to what metric should be used when discussing future needs and measuring the impact of policy changes.

Democrats on the Joint Select Committee focused on how mandatory spending reforms must be complemented with reduced defense spending and additional revenues, while Republicans highlighted spending cuts, not revenues, as most critical. Democrats are wary of making cuts in discretionary spending. Joint Select Committee Co-chair Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) pointed out that additional discretionary cuts will have “real social costs.” However, Democrats do want to make some cuts in discretionary spending but want a large part of those cuts to come from defense, which Republicans oppose.

Committee Co-chair Representative Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) focused on the spending increases that have occurred since President Obama took office. “While prudent stewardship of the discretionary budget is helpful, it alone cannot solve the crisis,” stressed the Congressman.

The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction must present a plan to Congress by November 23 to cut \$1.2 trillion, and Congress must pass the plan by December 23 to prevent sequestration or automatic budget cuts split between defense and non-defense spending.

## **REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC SUPER COMMITTEE PROPOSALS**

### **SUMMARY OF THE “DUELING PROPOSALS”**

On Tuesday October 25, prior to the Joint Select Committee’s hearing, Democrats on the Super Committee released a plan in a closed-door congressional meeting for slashing up to \$3 trillion over 10 years with cuts of anywhere from \$400 to \$500 billion from Medicare and Medicaid and the rest from changes to the tax code aimed at increasing revenue. The proposal does not have the support of all the Democrats on the Joint Select Committee; specifically, Rep. Jim Clyburn opposed the plan’s cuts to Medicare and Medicaid.

Predictably, the Democrats’ proposed tax increases drew intense criticism from the Republicans on the Joint Select Committee. The ideological divide apparent at the hearing was only further cemented with the release late Wednesday night of the Republican Committee members’ plan. The plan proposes more modest cuts of only \$2 trillion over a 10 year period mainly through spending cuts. The remaining 25 percent of savings would come from increases in non-tax revenue, such as the sale of government wireless spectrum.

### **COMPARISON OF THE PROPOSALS**

Neither plan has been released publicly; the information available has mainly come from media reports based on leaks. As noted above, the plans are indicative of the ideological and philosophical divide between Committee members. Namely, Democrats

propose combining revenue increases with some spending cuts while Republicans are more focused on spending cuts without the accompanying revenue increases.

Below are some major highlights of the plans:

- Republicans propose cutting \$150 billion more than Democrats from benefit programs such as food stamps and federal nutrition programs.
- Democrats want to continue stimulus efforts and propose spending \$300 billion on infrastructure and job creation programs—both opposed by Republicans.
- Democrats propose raising \$1 trillion in new revenue through tax reform. In contrast, Republicans base their increases in tax revenue through changes to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and reforms to spur economic growth, not tax reform.
- One area of agreement between the plans is that they both propose a way to find savings in Social Security by changing how cost-of-living adjustments are calculated.

The gap between the plans indicates the need for compromise from both parties before the Joint Select Committee can propose a plan. With the deadline quick approaching, convincing Super Committee members is only half of the battle; it will also be critical to have the support of Members of Congress once the Joint Select Committee submits a proposal. House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) has already dismissed the Democratic proposal as unserious, even though the proposal was pitched as a potential consensus package. Other Democrats in Congress have already balked at the idea of major cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. Those criticisms plus the Super Committee Democrats' disdain for the Republican package as wholly partisan reveal that the continuing gulf between the parties does not seem to be narrowing.

### OUTLOOK

The Committee's next hearing will take place on November 1, and former Senator Alan Simpson (WY) and former White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles are scheduled to testify. Sen. Simpson and Mr. Bowles co-chaired President Obama's bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, which released a plan to cut \$4 trillion from the budget over the next ten years.

### **REP. FREDERICA WILSON HOSTS FORUMS ON HAITI**

On Wednesday, Rep. Frederica Wilson hosted "Building Back Haiti More Justly: Enforcing the Rights of Haiti's Poor Majority" a policy forum covering internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Haiti, unlawful and violent evictions in tent camps, ongoing deportations, and a rights-based approach to rebuilding. Rep. Wilson hosted the event with Reps. Yvette Clarke (NY-11) and Maxine Waters (CA-35) with participation from Nicole Phillips, Staff Attorney with Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) and Assistant Director for Haiti Programs, University of San Francisco School of Law; Mario Joseph, Managing Attorney, Bureau des Avocats Internationaux; Etant Dupain, Director of Bri Kouri Nouvèl Gaye, a Haitian grassroots organization that is a partner of TransAfrica's Let Haiti Live Project; Laura Raymond, International Human Rights Associate of the Center for Constitutional Rights; Gueter Aurelien, Law Student,

University of Miami Law Clinics; and Mary Beth Gallagher, Advocacy Officer of RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights

Rep. Wilson followed that briefing with another briefing on Thursday titled, “The Dominican Republic’s Attempts to Revoke the Citizen of Dominicans of Haitian Ancestry” which was also a policy forum covering the Dominican Republic’s discriminatory stance towards citizens of Haitian ancestry. Noemi Mendez, a leading Dominican human rights lawyer representing some of the effected individuals; Ana Maria Belique Delba, one of the few Dominicans of Haitian ethnicity who has won an appeal of the confiscation of her identity documents; and Sonia Pierre, a Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights Laureate and a Dominican of Haitian-descent all participated in the event. Rep. Wilson was joined by Reps. Yvette Clarke (NY), Gwen Moore (WI), Barbara Lee (CA).

### **REP. FREDERICA WILSON ANNOUNCES \$2.3 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR URBAN DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

On Tuesday, Rep. Wilson announced nearly \$2.3 million in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The funding will be awarded to the state of Florida and will be directed to Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami for urban disaster and emergency preparedness.

The two grants – \$1.147 million for Miami-Dade and \$1.149 million for the City of Miami – will focus on continuing “the development and maintenance of National Urban Search and Rescue Response System resources” for urban disaster relief and emergency preparedness. “This critical funding will create jobs and better prepare South Florida to deal with a natural disaster or large-scale emergency,” said Congresswoman Wilson. “I thank FEMA for awarding these funds to our communities during a time of need.”

### **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY RECEIVES OVER \$2 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR FORENSICS**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) officially announced this week that the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) would receive \$1,190,348 for the FY 2011 Forensic DNA Backlog Reduction Program. MDPD also received \$175,000 for Forensic Science Improvements. NIJ awarded 387 grants and cooperative agreements for a total of approximately \$207 million in federal funding.

### **REP. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ HOSTS TELE-TOWN HALL WITH VALERIE JARRETT**

On Tuesday, Oct. 25, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz held a telephone town hall to talk about women’s issues with over 9,000 constituents throughout South Florida. She

was joined by special guest Valerie Jarrett, a senior advisor to the President and the Chair of the White House Council on Women and Girls.

## **REP. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ HOLDS BRIEFING ON CARING FOR AGING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**

On Wednesday, Rep. Wasserman Schultz held a briefing, along with the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, Selfhelp Community Services and the UJA Federation of New York, on the unique challenges faced by social services agencies serving the Holocaust survivor population. Currently, there are approximately 127,000 Holocaust survivors living in the United States today, three quarters of which are in their 80s and 90s; two thirds of Holocaust survivors are elderly women; and approximately two thirds of Holocaust survivors live alone, placing them at risk of institutionalization. Furthermore, more than half of all Holocaust survivors fall beneath 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold.

In July, Rep. Wasserman Shultz introduced H.R. 2786, which supports the goal of ensuring that Holocaust survivors are able to live with dignity, comfort, and security in their remaining years. To do so, this legislation adds Holocaust survivors to a list of groups of seniors with increased economic or social need that receive preferential services through the Older Americans Act. H.R. 2786 also designates an individual within the Administration on Aging to have responsibility for the activities of Holocaust survivors, and it creates a five-year grant program for transportation innovations for this community.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, along with her South Florida colleagues Reps. Hastings and Deutch, are cosponsors of H.R. 2786.

## **BIPARTISAN SENATE BILL WOULD ENCOURAGE FOREIGNERS TO BUY U.S. HOMES**

Last week Senators Schumer (D – NY) and Lee (R – UT) introduced a bipartisan bill that would allow foreigners who spend at least \$500,000 on a residential property to obtain visas allowing them to live in the United States. According to the National Association of Realtors, residential sales to foreigners and recent immigrants totaled \$82 billion in the 12-month period that ended March 31, up from \$66 billion the previous year. California accounted for 12% of those sales, second only to Florida. OIA is working with the congressional delegation and the federal lobbying team to determine the County's position and possible advocacy plan concerning the bill.

## **HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE BILLS – COUNTY PRIORITIES (PREPARED BY AKERMAN SENTERFITT)**

Earlier this week the House Judiciary Committee was scheduled to mark up bills related to federal regulations (H.R. 10), concealed firearms (H.R. 822), child protection (H.R.

2870), synthetic drugs (H.R. 1254), firearms amnesty for veterans (H.R. 420), and immigration (H.R. 3012). The committee approved three bills – H.R. 10, H.R. 822, and H.R. 3012. The committee began to mark up H.R. 1254, but a long series of roll call votes on the House floor late yesterday morning (the last votes of the week) resulted in the mark-up being postponed. The committee issued a notice that they will reconvene the mark-up next Wednesday at 1:00 pm. Below is a list of the bills and summaries for each. OIA and the Federal Lobbying Team will continue to monitor and report on these bills as they proceed through the legislative process.

#### *H.R. 10, the Regulations From the Executive in Need of Scrutiny Act of 2011*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Geoff Davis (KY) on January 20, 2011. The bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, which marked up the bill on October 25. The Committee approved H.R. 10 along party lines, 22-14. The bill would require congressional approval of regulations with an annual economic cost of \$100 million or more. The bill would require federal agencies to submit to Congress a report with the proposed rule, and Congress would then have to pass a joint resolution of approval within 70 legislative days of receiving the report.

H.R. 10 is part of the House Republicans' job-creating agenda. Republicans believe that minimizing regulatory burdens will help stimulate the economy. However, Democrats argue that the bill would delay and complicate the rule-making process, which could ultimately harm the public's health and safety.

The bill will now be referred to the full House for consideration. We expect that the Republican leadership will likely schedule it for consideration soon.

A Senate companion bill (S. 299) has been introduced by Senator Rand Paul (KY). The bill was referred to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which held hearing on the bill this summer. The Committee has taken no other action on the bill to date.

#### *H.R. 822, the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act of 2011*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Cliff Stearns (FL) on February 18, 2011. It was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, which marked up the bill yesterday. The bill would allow permit holders to carry concealed handguns across state lines.

H.R. 822 was approved by the Committee by a nearly party line vote of 19-11. One Republican, Congressman Dan Lungren from California, voted against the bill over concerns about the bill's impact on states' rights.

The bill would allow individuals with permits to possess concealed handguns in one state to carry in other states that allow their residents to carry concealed guns as long as permit holders comply with the concealed carry laws of the other states. However, the bill makes eligibility rules exempt from this provision. Opponents argued

unsuccessfully that the bill would override a state's ability to determine who should be allowed to carry concealed handguns within its border. A Lundgren amendment was adopted that requires a GAO study of the laws and regulations of states that allow non-residents to receive permits.

The bill would not apply to states that prohibit residents from carrying concealed weapons. Currently, the State of Illinois is the only state that has such a prohibition.

The Judiciary Committee actually began marking up the bill on October 13 and continued to October 14. During those two days, Committee Democrats offered several amendments that would have limited the bill's scope, but they were all rejected. The bill will now be referred to the full House for consideration.

#### *H.R. 2870, the Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act of 2011*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (IL) in September. The bill has five cosponsors, including Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

The bill reauthorizes several programs directed at sex offenders that were established by the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, including the Sex Offender Management Assistance (SOMA) Program, the Jessica Lunsford Address Verification Grant program, and the Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment Grants. The bill would also reauthorize federal assistance with violations of registration requirements and funds for additional prosecutors for offenses related to the sexual exploitation of children. The bill authorizes appropriations for these programs from FY2012 through FY2016.

A similar reauthorization bill has not yet been introduced in the Senate.

#### *H.R. 1254, the Synthetic Drug Control Act of 2011*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Charlie Dent (PA) on March 20, 2011. It was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Judiciary Committee.

The Energy and Commerce Committee marked up the bill this summer. The full committee reported it out on July 28, 2011. The House Judiciary is scheduled to complete work on the bill next Tuesday.

The bill would amend the Controlled Substances Act to categorize a number of synthetic drugs as Schedule I Controlled Substances. In particular, it would put synthetic drugs mimicking marijuana and methamphetamines onto the restricted drug list.

The bill also extends the period for which the U.S. Attorney General may temporarily schedule a substance in Schedule I to avoid an imminent hazard to public safety to two years with a one-year extension. Currently, the law allows for the Attorney General to temporarily schedule substances for one year with a six-month extension

A Senate companion bill, S. 605, was introduced by Senator Chuck Grassley (IA). The Senate Judiciary Committee reported the bill out on July 29, 2011. It has been referred to the full Senate for consideration.

*H.R. 420, the Veterans' Heritage Firearms Act of 2011*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Rehberg (MT) on January 25, 2011. It would provide an amnesty period during which veterans and their family members can register certain firearms in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record. It has 211 co-sponsors, including Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, Congressman David Rivera, and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, as well as several other Florida Republican Members.

The bill has been introduced in the House each session going back until 2002 and has never made it through the process. This session, the bill was also introduced in the Senate by Senator Tester (MT). It is S. 798 in the Senate and has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee for consideration.

Specifically, the bill would provide a 90-day amnesty period during which veterans and their family members can register any firearm in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record acquired before October 31, 1968, by a veteran while a member of the Armed Forces stationed outside the continental United States. The bill grants such an individual limited immunity under the federal criminal code and the Internal Revenue Code with respect to the acquisition, possession, transportation, or alteration of such firearm before or concurrent with such registration. It also extends such immunity to a veteran who attempts to register a qualifying firearm outside of the amnesty period if the veteran surrenders the firearm within 30 days after being notified of potential criminal liability for continued possession.

The bill also requires the Attorney General to: (1) transfer each firearm qualifying as a curio or relic which has been forfeited to the United States to the first qualified museum that requests it, and (2) publish information identifying each such firearm which is available to be transferred to a museum. The legislation prohibits the Attorney General from destroying any such firearm which has been forfeited until five years after the forfeiture, and requires that any firearm transferred to a qualified museum be registered to the transferee.

*H.R. 3012, the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act*

The bill was introduced by Congressman Jason Chaffetz (UT) in September to eliminate the percentage limit on employment-based immigration visas from any one country. It was reported out of committee by voice vote.

H.R. 3012 amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the per country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrants, and to increase the per country numerical limitation for family based immigrants. The bill also amends the Chinese

Student Protection Act of 1992 to eliminate the provision requiring the reduction of annual Chinese immigrant visas to offset status adjustments under the Act.

The bill has bipartisan support because it would help immigrants with advanced degrees remain in the U.S. However, there is some concern that moving individual immigration bills that have bipartisan support will make it more difficult to move a comprehensive immigration reform bill that will likely include controversial provisions such as legal status for illegal immigrants. There is no similar bill currently pending in the Senate.

## **COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE HOLDS HEARING ON AMERICA'S PORTS**

On Wednesday, October 26, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment held a hearing entitled "The Economic Importance of Seaports: Is the United States Prepared for 21st Century Trade Realities?" The purpose of the hearing was to analyze the impact that seaports have on the U.S. economy and discuss issues with the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF).

Subcommittee Chairman Gibbs expressed that waterborne commerce is the most ignored portion of U.S. trade. He thinks that the ports have done a great job of trying to update technologies but cuts in the Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) budget and lowered funding levels in the HMTF will hurt the President's Export Initiative. The Chairman said that only two ports are at the authorized depths and widths and this is hurting the country's ability to utilize U.S. ports effectively. He believes that this debate is about keeping American businesses competitive and not about helping specific shipping companies.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Bishop said that seaports are some of the most important parts of the U.S. economy. He is concerned about how to meet the needs of U.S. waterways under the current fiscal constraints. The Ranking Member recognized three themes in the discussion over the importance of seaports. These include: 1. market drivers that include how quickly and cheaply a product can be shipped; 2. job creation at ports; and 3. the necessity for a more efficient and timely way to fund U.S. seaports. Ranking Member Bishop is concerned about the \$500 million cut in the Corps budget in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. He would like to maintain the HMTF but is concerned that shifting the Corps' focus on dredging would inhibit its ability to succeed at other tasks.

Assistant Secretary Jo Ellen Darcy of the Army-Civil Works, United States Army, said that the Corps invests over \$1.5 billion annually to maintain commercial navigation infrastructure to help ports as they move over 2 billion tons of commerce annually. She explained the importance of dredging that also creates environmental benefits if dredged material is placed in wetlands areas. She spoke about the Army's plans to expand and deepen many ports including the Port of Miami to 50 feet.

Jerry Bridges, Chairman of the Board of American Association of Port Authorities, explained that there are many challenges and opportunities for seaports including the expansion of the Panama Canal, growth in ship size, hemispheric competition, the goal of increasing U.S. exports and the free trade agreements. Mr. Bridges said that the federal government should make dredging a priority and not cut port security programs. He also explained that revenue created in the HMTF is not being efficiently spent to help U.S. seaports to meet depth standards.

Chief Executive Officer of the Jacksonville Port Authority, Paul Anderson, explained the technological advancements that the Jacksonville Port has made to expand its containing capacity. He said that harbor project sponsors often face constantly changing standards that challenge ports' ability to modernize and adapt to newer trade practices. Mr. Anderson said that investing in infrastructure now will help to expand U.S. exports and turn around the U.S. economy.

Chairman Gibbs asked Ms. Darcy if she thought that the HMTF is properly funded. She answered that the amount that the President requested (\$758 million) for the Corps is what the Army believes is sufficient to maintain its port projects. Ms. Darcy confirmed that there is a \$6 billion balance in the HMTF. The Chairman also asked about the need for more dredging and harbor maintenance and if there are opportunities if the money in the HMTF was available. Mr. Bridges and Mr. Anderson think that most of dredging and maintenance needs could be covered if ports were authorized to use the full amount of the HMTF.

## **PRESIDENT OBAMA ANNOUNCES PLAN TO HELP HOMEOWNERS**

This week President Obama announced a plan to help struggling homeowners across the country through changes in the government's Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP), which will make it easier for millions of homeowners to take advantage of the opportunity to refinance their mortgages at the current low-interest rates.

The series of enhancements to the program allow for homeowners who owe more than 125 percent of the market value of their homes to get new loans. With interest rates at historic lows, many of these homeowners would save thousands of dollars each year by refinancing their existing mortgage. For those individuals who wish to refinance but have been deterred by the fees associated with it, the President's plan eliminates red tape via the Federal Housing Finance Agency. This will make the process easier and less expensive to refinance and lower monthly mortgage payments.

Eligible homeowners must have a mortgage owned or managed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, and it must have been sold to those agencies on or before May 31, 2009. The FHFA announced that it expects the changes to the HARP program to be implemented by November 15.

## **FY12 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS ACTION – UPDATE**

The FY12 Agriculture-CJS-Transportation/HUD appropriations minibuss will be taken up for consideration by the Senate next week. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had hoped to complete work on the package last week, before adjourning for a weeklong recess. However, the Senate was unable to finish its work on all of the amendments. There are approximately two dozen pending amendments to the minibuss bill, with a final vote on the package likely to occur on Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Senate has considered a number of amendments to the Commerce-Justice-Science section of the bill already, including:

- An amendment offered by Senator Cornyn (TX) to bar the use of funds for the undercover operation known as Fast and Furious or similar "gun walking" programs. The amendment was adopted by a vote of 99 to 0.
- Senator Webb (VA) offered an amendment to create a national criminal justice commission tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system and reporting its findings and recommendations. The amendment was rejected.
- Senator Grassley (IA) offered an amendment, which was rejected, that would have required the U.S. Department of Justice's inspector general to audit at least 10 percent of grants funded by the measure. The amendment would have barred grant recipients found to have used funds in an unauthorized manner, and did not resolve the issue, from receiving certain grants administered by the Justice Department for the following two fiscal years. The amendment, which needed 60 votes to pass, was rejected by a vote of 46-54.
- Senator Ayotte (NH) offered an amendment that would bar the use of DOJ funds for civilian trials of suspects belonging to al-Qaeda or its affiliates that have participated in planning attacks on the United States. The amendment was rejected.

## **CLIMATE COMMUNITIES WEEKLY WEBINAR**

On Thursday, Climate Communities held their weekly webinar titled, "Successfully Competing for EPA Brownfield Grant Funding." The webinar highlighted that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Brownfields Office is currently accepting applications for FY 2012 grants through November 28th. EPA Brownfield grants provide communities with funding to assess, cleanup, and plan the redevelopment of contaminated or potentially contaminated properties. During the webinar communities highlighted how they were able to successfully compete for funding and provide tips on how to effectively position your application.

According to Climate Communities, "many communities throughout the country are utilizing EPA Brownfields funding to enhance their local sustainability efforts. Some localities are converting brownfield properties into parks and other greenspaces that increase recreational opportunities while avoiding greenhouse gas emissions. Others

are redeveloping brownfields for commercial reuse to anchor downtown revitalization initiatives that avoid sprawl and greenfield development. Utilizing this EPA funding to begin placing brownfield properties back into productive reuse can help your community develop or being implementing a sustainability strategy.”

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES’ (NACO) LARGE URBAN COUNTY CAUCUS (LUCC)**

The National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) met in South Florida this week to discuss the many critical legislative issues impacting the nation’s urban counties. The LUCC Steering Committee Members worked to determine LUCC’s 2012 legislative agenda and calendar of events. OIA Director Joe Rasco attended the event.

## **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

## **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](http://www.miamidade.gov/intergov/federal_lobbyist.asp)

## **NEXT WEEK’S CALENDAR: OCTOBER 31ST – NOVEMBER 4TH**

*The House will be in session next week*

*The Senate will be in session next week*