

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

September 19th – September 23rd, 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

COMMISSIONER MONESTIME ATTENDS CBC CONFERENCE, HAITI ROUNDTABLE AND MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON

Having landed in the nation's capital just hours following the completion of a marathon BCC budget session, Commissioner Jean Monestime met with House Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to discuss issues of importance to Miami-Dade County, economic development and Haiti. Commissioner Monestime is attending the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Annual Legislative Conference. On Friday, the Commissioner also attended a U.S. Department of State conference titled "Partnering for Haiti's Future." The conference was open forum for stakeholders and the public to discuss recovery efforts in Haiti. OIA accompanied the Commissioner and his Chief of Staff Gerard Philippeaux on Friday. Commissioner Monestime will attend the remainder of the CBC conference through Saturday.



OIA, PORT OF MIAMI & FCBF MEET WITH THE OFFICES OF 23 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

OIA, along with the Port of Miami and the Florida Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association (FCBF), organized and participated in meetings with 23 offices of the Florida Congressional delegation, including both Senators offices, in addition to the Washington DC Office of Florida Governor Rick Scott to discuss issues related to trade including the pending Free Trade Agreements, the Highway Transportation bill and Customs Reauthorization measures. Among these, were meetings with the offices of Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, John Mica and the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN HOLDS HEARING ON PENDING FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

On Friday, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, held a hearing titled, "Job Creation Made Easy: The Colombia, Panama,

and South Korea Free Trade Agreements.” Participating in the hearing were Mr. Luis Arguello, Sr., CEO & President, DemeTech (a Miami-Dade County based company), Mr. Myron Brilliant, Senior Vice President for International Affairs for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Drew Greenblatt, President, Marlin Steel Wire Products and Ms. Thea Lee, Deputy Chief of Staff for the AFL-CIO.

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, in her opening statement said, “The increase of exports would spur economic growth throughout the U.S., including in my district in South Florida. Colombia is already South Florida’s second largest trading partner, accounting for more than \$5 billion dollars a year and supporting thousands of jobs. And Panama is among Miami-Dade county’s top 25 trading partners, with Florida as a whole ranking first in exports to that country. In fact, Panama’s trade with South Florida has grown nearly 30% in recent years.”

“These figures will expand further once these two FTAs are approved. However, the repeated delays over the past three years have already hurt many companies. For example, 96 percent of the flowers that are imported to the U.S. from Colombia pass through my Congressional district of South Florida. But the small and medium-size businesses in this sector have been hit hard from the higher tariffs resulting from the expiration of the Andean Trade Promotion Act earlier this year, a problem that can be easily fixed by passage of the Colombia FTA.”

SENATE MOVES FORWARD WITH LEGISLATIVE VEHICLE FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Yesterday, the Senate passed the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) bill (H.R. 2832) by a vote of 70 to 27. An amendment was added to the bill that provides Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits to workers displaced by foreign trade.

The White House and Democrats have made extension of TAA benefits their condition to moving forward with the South Korea, Columbia and Panama free trade agreements. Senate Republicans had offered a number of amendments during the debate to limit the availability of TAA benefits, but they were all rejected. Opponents of TAA argue that the program is too broad and has provided benefits to individuals who are unemployed for reasons unrelated to foreign trade manufacturing losses.

Following passage of the GSP/TAA bill yesterday, Speaker Boehner urged the President to send the FTAs to the Hill before the House votes on the GSP/TAA bill so they can consider them at the same time. The Administration has still not said when it will formally submit the three trade bills to Congress. However, since the South Korean President Lee Myung-bak is scheduled for an official state visit on October 13, there is some speculation that the FTAs may be officially transmitted to the Hill in advance of his visit.

REP. ROS-LEHTINEN COMMENDS THE CUBAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

On Thursday, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, participated in a briefing on Capitol Hill sponsored by the Cuban American Bar Association (CABA) to discuss the ongoing human rights violations in Cuba. The briefing featured one of the founders of the Ladies in White, Josefa Lopez Peña, two independent attorneys in Cuba: René Gómez Manzano and Laritza Diversent, and the International Republican Institute's Regional Director of Latin America and the Caribbean, Alex Sutton. Nilda Pedrosa, Assistant Dean, Development & External Affairs for the FIU College of Law also attended the briefing.

The Chairman was joined on the panel by fellow Miami-Dade County Members of Congress, Mario Diaz-Balart and David Rivera as well as Congressman Albio Sires of New Jersey. The Chairman said, "This morning's briefing reflects the Cuban American Bar Association's tireless commitment to the people of Cuba and their efforts to advance the rule of law, human rights and democracy on the island. Forums like these provide an opportunity to hear from valiant advocates of freedoms and democracy like Josefa Lopez Peña, René Gómez Manzano, and Laritza Diversent, and bring to light the daily abuses the people of Cuba endure at the hands of their oppressors. It was a great honor to be a part of this event and I commend these young leaders for continuously highlighting the work of the opposition in Cuba, and giving voice to those who would otherwise be silenced by the regime."

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION 41ST ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's (CBCF) 41st Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) took place in Washington D.C. this week and through the weekend. The CBCF's ALC attracts more than 12,000 attendees every year and provides the platform for collaboration and policy development to occur among international, national, state and local leaders and their constituents. The ALC holds more than 70 seminars and information forums on relevant topics that capture and portray the concerns of a changing America.

CONGRESSWOMAN WILSON SERVES AS HONORARY HOST ON EDUCATION PANEL "THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2012"

Congresswoman Wilson participated as an honorary host in a major education panel, entitled "The High School Class of 2012," taking place at the 41st Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. The panel was moderated by Reverend Al Sharpton, founder of the National Action Network. The panel sought to answer questions facing the nation's youth as the high school class of 2012 is getting ready to graduate. Some of these questions include, what type of world are they entering? What kind of jobs will they have when they graduate? This forum will bring together the "village" of today's youth - their parents, educators, and community to address the infrastructure of readying the nation's youth.

Panelists included, Karen Aronowitz, President of United Teachers of Dade - Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools - Barrington Irving, "Youngest Pilot to Fly a Plane Around the World Solo" - Dr. Henry Lewis III, President of Florida Memorial University - Isaiah "Zeke" Thomas, III, Head Men's Basketball Coach, Florida International University (FIU).

REP. WILSON PARTICIPATES IN ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE (ALC) FORUM - "HAITI: A NEW BEGINNING"

Rep. Wilson participated in the issue forum "Haiti: A New Beginning" taking place at the 41st Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF). Rep. Wilson was joined by House members John Conyers (MI), Donald Payne (NJ), Maxine Waters (CA), Yvette Clarke (NY), and Barbara Lee (CA) to discuss opportunities for Haiti in the rebuilding effort as well as the economic, physical, and social fallout from the tragic earthquake.

REP. WILSON INTRODUCES AMENDMENTS PROMOTING SAFETY IN THE PEACE CORPS

Rep. Wilson offered a series of amendments during a committee markup in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on Wednesday that aims to establish a "Sexual Assault Advisory Council" within six months, require the Peace Corps to study the benefits of extending internet service to its volunteers, state explicitly that there will be no loss of pay for any corps member reporting a sexual assault, and extends the measurement of crimes, arrests, and prosecutions within Peace Corps-serviced nations to those the program may return to in the foreseeable future. This would include countries like Haiti which has had Peace Corps volunteers as recently as 2005.

Rep. Wilson said, "The safety and security of our young men and women in the Peace Corps is an issue that has been swept under the rug for far too long," said Rep. Wilson. "These common-sense measures will promote their well-being and help reduce the appalling rate of sexual assaults on our female corps members. I applaud Chairman Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Berman for addressing this very important issue."

The Committee markup encompassed two bills, H.R. 2699 – The Peace Corps Volunteer Service Improvement Act of 2011 and H.R. 2337 – The Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 that addresses the crisis of sexual assault within the ranks of the Peace Corps.

3% WITHHOLDING REPEAL

H.R. 674, the bill to repeal of the 3% withholding tax, now has 246 cosponsors, including Reps. Ros-Lehtinen, Diaz-Balart and Rivera. Sen. Rubio is a sponsor of the Senate companion bill. Commissioner Sally Heyman, who has been a strong leader and tireless advocate in support of this legislation, has written several letters to committee members urging them to move this legislation forward. Additionally, OIA

and Department of Procurement Management Director Miriam Singer continue to work with the County's congressional delegation to urge congress to pass this legislation and have it signed into law by President Obama.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HONOR FORMER REP. CARRIE MEEK

On Thursday, former Rep. Carrie Meek was honored by members on the floor of the House of Representatives. Meek, the mother of former Rep. Kendrick Meek, was the first African-American elected to represent Florida in the House since Reconstruction. Representatives Mario-Diaz Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Frederica Wilson, who now holds her former seat, all spoke in praise of their former colleague.

SENATE FY2012 LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS BILL

On Wednesday, the full Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY2012 Labor-HHS-Education bill. D.C. lobbying team Akerman Senterfitt provided the following summary to highlight funding for some programs of interest to Miami-Dade County:

Head Start: The bill includes \$7.9 billion for Head Start, which is a \$340 million increase over the FY2011 level. This level will maintain the recent expansion of 61,000 Head Start slots funded with Recovery Act funding in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 and in total will allow Head Start to provide comprehensive early childhood services to 968,000 low-income children and their families.

Community Health Centers: The bill includes \$1.6 billion for Community Health Centers (CHCs). Combined with mandatory funding provided in the Affordable Care Act, the FY2012 program level for CHCs is \$2.8 billion – an increase of \$200 million. This level will allow for base grant adjustments for all existing CHCs and the expansion of the national network of clinics. As we have previously reported, the Public Health Trust/Jackson Health System is interested in getting its North Dade Health Center qualified as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that is eligible for federal funding.

Child Care and Development Block Grant: The bill includes \$2.2 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, including \$283.6 million specified for child care quality improvement activities. The bill maintains funding at the FY2011 level and, including mandatory funding, will allow States to provide child care subsidies to an estimated 1.6 million low-income children and their working families.

Senior Nutrition: The bill includes \$817.8 million for senior nutrition programs, including congregate meals, home-delivered meals and the nutrition services incentive program. These programs provide seniors with the meals they need to stay healthy and remain independent in their community. The bill maintains funding at the FY2011 level.

Community Services Block Grant: The Senate bill includes \$678.6 million, the same as the FY2011 funding level, for CSBG. This block grant provides critical funding for

community action agencies across the country to help ensure a safety net at the local level for the most vulnerable Americans.

Ryan White AIDS Programs: The Senate bill provides \$2.35 billion for Ryan White AIDS programs. This is a slight increase over the FY2011 level (\$2.34 billion). These programs provide a wide range of community-based services, including primary and home healthcare, case management, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and nutritional services.

Administration on Aging (AoA): The Senate bill provides \$1,534,701,000 for the Administration on Aging (AoA), which includes \$52,000,000 in Medicare trust funds. This is a slight decrease from the FY2011 level of \$1,549,322,000, and the President's request of \$1,787,944,000 for the AoA. The AoA is charged with administering programs through the national aging network that promote the development of comprehensive, coordinated home- and community-based care for seniors.

The House has not marked up its version of the FY2012 Labor-HHS-Education bill. The mark up that was scheduled for earlier this month was indefinitely postponed after some Republicans objected to the spending levels in the bill. At this point, the House Appropriations Committee is not expected to mark up its bill. It will likely go into the House-Senate negotiations on the omnibus appropriations with a draft bill prepared by the subcommittee, but not formally marked up by the members of the committee. Appropriators are expected to begin working on the omnibus bill after the Continuing Resolution is completed. OIA and the DC lobbying team will continue to keep the BCC and County Departments posted on any developments as the FY2012 appropriations process moves forward.

CLIMATE COMMUNITIES

On Thursday, Climate Communities held their weekly call, titled "Energy & Sustainability Funding Under Attack." Climate Communities discussed the threats to federal sustainability programs as they compete with other funding priorities in the cost-cutting political environment in Washington. According to Climate Communities, "the House of Representatives has proposed eliminating funding for the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative and the DOT TIGER grant program, and slashing funding for the DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy office. Earlier this month, the DOE Inspector General released a report that determined nearly a third of the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Block Grant (EECBG) funding allocated to localities in the Recovery Act was still unspent and recommended that DOE consider re-capturing grant funding or working with grantees to speed disbursement."

GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD 2012: PALIN DECISION "CLOSE," REP. MCCOTTER ENDS LONGSHOT BID – BACKS ROMNEY UPON EXIT

On Thursday, Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (MI) ended his long shot bid to claim the Republican presidential nomination, abandoning his presidential primary campaign

before it could get started, and announced he would run for re-election to Congress. Rep. McCotter was shut out of each Republican candidate's debate and failed to raise serious cash. With McCotter's campaign failing to catch on, he threw his support behind front runner and fellow Michigan native Mitt Romney.

He gave a slight endorsement to Texas Gov. Rick Perry, saying that he likes Gov. Perry, while adding that he thinks the country isn't ready for another Texas president so soon after George W. Bush. "He may be a vice presidential nominee," stated McCotter.

Meanwhile, former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin continues to play the waiting game. In a letter to supporters earlier this week, she stated that she is "close" to making a decision, but many pundits believe that she could wait until October before finally deciding on whether or not to jump in the race.

Here is a list of candidates who have announced they will run, and some other potential candidates.

OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED WILL RUN:

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

YET TO OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE:

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

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: SEPTEMBER 26 – SEPTEMBER 30

The House & Senate may be in session early next week.