

TO: Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

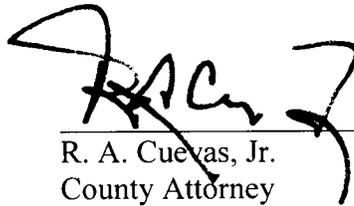
DATE: July 19, 2011

FROM: R. A. Cuevas, Jr.
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Resolution urging the federal
government to extend Visa Waiver
status to Argentina, Brazil and Chile;
further urging Congress to pass the
Secure Travel & Counterterrorism
Partnership Program Act of 2011

This substitute differs from the original item in that it also urges Congress to pass the Secure Travel & Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011.

The accompanying resolution was prepared and placed on the agenda at the request of Prime Sponsor Senator Javier D. Souto.



R. A. Cuevas, Jr.
County Attorney

RAC/cp

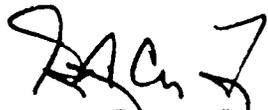


MEMORANDUM

(Revised)

TO: Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: July 19, 2011

FROM: 
R. A. Cuevas, Jr.
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Substitute
Agenda Item No. 11(A)(2)

Please note any items checked.

- "3-Day Rule" for committees applicable if raised**
- 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing**
- 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing**
- Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget**
- Budget required**
- Statement of fiscal impact required**
- Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Manager's report for public hearing**
- No committee review**
- Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3's ____, 3/5's ____, unanimous____) to approve**
- Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required**

Approved _____ Mayor
Veto _____
Override _____

Substitute
Agenda Item No. 11(A)(2)
7-19-11

RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION URGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO
EXTEND VISA WAIVER STATUS TO ARGENTINA, BRAZIL
AND CHILE; FURTHER URGING CONGRESS TO PASS THE
SECURE TRAVEL & COUNTERTERRORISM PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM ACT OF 2011

WHEREAS, the Visa Waiver Program is a U.S. government program that allows citizens of specific countries to travel to the U.S. for tourism or business for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa; and

WHEREAS, 36 countries currently participate in the Visa Waiver Program, including 30 European countries and Australia, Brunei, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and Singapore; and

WHEREAS, citizens of Bermuda, Canada and Mexico can also travel to the U.S. without a visa; and

WHEREAS, to be admitted to the Visa Waiver Program, a country must meet various security requirements, such as enhanced law enforcement and security-related data sharing with the U.S., and also maintain high standards for counterterrorism, law enforcement, border control, and document security; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, 15.7 million people from the 36 countries that currently qualify for the Visa Waiver Program visited the U.S., accounting for two-thirds of all overseas visitors; and

WHEREAS, while they were here, these visitors spent nearly \$57 billion across 20 travel-related industries, including lodging, dining and transportation, supporting 492,000 American jobs; and

WHEREAS, with the exception of French Guiana, no South American country currently participates in the Visa Waiver Program; and

WHEREAS, Brazil, with a population of nearly 200 million people and a gross domestic product exceeding a trillion dollars, represents a tremendous market for travel to the U.S. and in particular Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, despite having to secure a visa to enter the U.S., 1.2 million Brazilians visited the U.S. in 2010 injecting \$5.9 billion into the U.S. economy; and

WHEREAS, nonetheless, the U.S. share of Brazilian travel remains 14 percent below its share in the year 2000; and

WHEREAS, tourism competitors to the U.S. such as Portugal, Mexico, Italy and Germany all have attracted larger shares of the Brazilian tourism market in recent years, some countries seeing up to 50 percent growth in arrivals; and

WHEREAS, Chile and Argentina also represent significant travel markets to the U.S., yet Chilean tourism to the U.S. is down more than 30 percent from ten years ago, while globally the number of Chileans traveling to other countries overseas is up 50 percent; and

WHEREAS, all of South America, the European Union, Russia and New Zealand provide Brazilians and Chilean citizens visa-free privileges for short-term tourism visits; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the U.S. State Department identified countries interested in participating in the Visa Waiver Program, referred to as road map countries, including both Argentina and Brazil; and

WHEREAS, extending the Visa Waiver Program to South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile could increase significantly international tourism to the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, of the 5.8 million international visitors to Miami-Dade County in 2008, 43 percent came from South America, so nowhere would the benefit of extending the Visa Waiver Program to Argentina, Brazil and Chile be greater than in Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, bills have been filed for consideration during the 112th Congress, S. 497 by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D – Maryland) and H.R. 959 by Representative Mike Quigley (D - Illinois), entitled the Secure Travel & Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011 that would restructure and improve the Visa Waiver Program to:

1. Authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate program countries;
2. Replace visa refusal rates with visa overstay rates in determining program participation;
3. Set a maximum 3 percent visa overstay rate for program countries; and
4. Revise probationary status and program termination provisions; and

WHEREAS, passage of S. 497, H.R. 959 or similar legislation could mean Brazil and Chile immediately could qualify for the Visa Waiver Program; and

WHEREAS, President Obama has indicated his support for passage of these bills; and

WHEREAS, because these bills hold the promise of increasing tourism, particularly in Miami, passage of these bills is a priority for the tourism industry and for the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau; and

WHEREAS, this Board would like to join the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau in urging Congress to pass the Secure Travel & Counterterrorism Partnership Program

Act of 2011 and urging the federal government to extend visa waiver status to Argentina, Brazil and Chile,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, that this Board:

Section 1. Urges the federal government to extend visa waiver status to Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

Section 2. Urges Congress to pass the Secure Travel & Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2011, S. 497, H.R. 959 or similar legislation.

Section 3. Directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the members of the Miami-Dade County Congressional Delegation, Senator Barbara Mikulski, Representative Mike Quigley, the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, the U.S. Secretary of State, and the President and CEO of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Section 4. Directs the County's federal lobbyists to advocate for the action set forth in Sections 1 and 2 above, and authorizes and directs the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to include this item in the 2011 and 2012 Federal Legislative Packages.

The Prime Sponsor of the foregoing resolution is Sen. Javier D. Souto. It was offered by Commissioner _____, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

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Joe A. Martinez, Chairman
Audrey M. Edmonson, Vice Chairwoman
Bruno A. Barreiro
Esteban L. Bovo, Jr.
Sally A. Heyman
Jean Monestime
Rebeca Sosa
Xavier L. Suarez
Lynda Bell
Jose "Pepe" Diaz
Barbara J. Jordan
Dennis C. Moss
Sen. Javier D. Souto

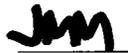
The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this 19th day of July, 2011. This resolution shall become effective ten (10) days after the date of its adoption unless vetoed by the Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY ITS BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HARVEY RUVIN, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as
to form and legal sufficiency.



Jess M. McCarty

