

TALLASSEE WEEKLY REPORT

June 8-12, 2009

Below please find a summary of events that took place around the state this past week.

Update on Legislation

Governor Crist signed the following bills this week that are of interest to Miami-Dade County:

SB 2430 – Affordable Housing Surtax – this bill was signed into law on June 10.

SB 216 – Local Government Campaign Preemption – this bill was signed into law on June 10.

SB 1580 – Partial Payment of Property Taxes – this bill was signed into law on June 10.

HB 1065 – Airport Safety/Wildlife Hazards – this bill was signed into law on June 11.

HB 1205 – Charter County Transit Surtax System – this bill was signed into law on June 10.

Governor Crist Visits Local Veteran's Hospital

Earlier this week, Governor Charlie Crist visited the local Veteran's hospital on the heels of signing HB 509 by Representative Zapata related to Veterans. Governor Crist, Representative Zapata and OIA staff were given a tour of the hospital, met with hospital administration, and were given the opportunity to meet with veterans.

2010 Elections

Earlier this week, State Senator Dan Gelber announced he would be seeking the Attorney General seat being vacated by Bill McCollum, who is running for Governor. Senator Gelber had previously been a candidate for the US Senate seat being vacated by Senator Mel Martinez, but announced last weekend he would be dropping out of that race.

Below is a list of statewide offices on the ballot, along with prominent candidates that have filed for each seat:

US Senator – Charlie Crist, (R); Marco Rubio (R); Bob Smith, (R); Kendrick Meek, (D)

Governor – Bill McCollum, (R); Alex Sink, (D)

Attorney General – Dan Gelber, (D); Dave Aronberg, (D)

CFO – Jeff Atwater, (R)

Agriculture Commissioner – Adam Putnam, (R); Carey Baker, (R); Randy Hatch, (D); Eric Draper, (D)

Aside from the names listed above, several other names are being mentioned as possible candidates. Among them are former State Senator and House Speaker Dan Webster and State Senator Paula Dockery for Governor; Lieutenant Governor Jeff Kottkamp for Attorney General; Miami Mayor Manny Diaz and State Senator Al Lawson for CFO.

Offshore Drilling

An organization by the name of “FloridaOil.org”, claiming that offshore drilling is the answer to the nation’s addiction to foreign oil, is beginning a drive to place a constitutional amendment on the 2010 ballot lifting Florida’s 20 year ban on offshore drilling.

During the last legislative session, the House passed language onto an environmental package, which would have allowed offshore drilling. This legislation was not heard in the Senate by President Jeff Atwater.

While FloridaOil.org has yet to finalize its ballot language, the plan is currently to extend Florida’s territorial boundaries 9 miles in the Gulf of Mexico and 3 miles in the Atlantic Ocean and allow drilling far enough that the platforms and derricks are out of sight from the shoreline.

In order to get the amendment on the ballot, the group would need to collect approximately 700,00 signatures by February 1.

Seminole Compact

The Seminole Tribe of Florida announced this week that they will not approve the gambling deal under the terms set by the Legislature during the legislative session. The tribe is citing provisions that would increase costs and competition.

Barry Richard, the attorney for the Seminoles, says the key issues are an increase in the annual payment to the state and a provision dealing with the tribe's exclusive right to offer blackjack and slot machines outside of South Florida.

The deal, as approved by the legislature, is a 15 year, \$2.3 billion agreement that has been submitted to the Governor for approval. The tribe and Governor's office would have until August 31 to settle the details of the deal under parameters put in place by the Legislature. The Legislature would then have to meet in Special Session to ratify the deal.

Representative Bill Galvano, the legislature's lead on this issue, has said the legislature will not overhaul the gambling deal. He also stated the \$150 million is reasonable in light of how much expansion the tribe has done in its gambling operations.

Hometown Democracy

The Florida Supreme Court has agreed to expedite a ruling on a case affecting the Hometown Democracy petition drive. Hometown Democracy is a ballot proposal which would give the voters a say in how their communities are developed. The request was granted at the request of Florida Hometown Democracy, the organization behind the petition drive.

The issue before the Court was a recent law which allows signers to revoke their signatures.

Hometown Democracy, unofficially, has enough signatures to get on the ballot if the justices strike down the aforementioned law by June 22. If the Court rules after June 22, the movement may begin to lose signatures.

Lincoln Day Dinner

On Saturday June 13, the Republican Party of Miami-Dade County will be holding its annual Lincoln Day Dinner, which is attended by federal, local, and state elected officials and other dignitaries.

