



# Washington Report

## VICE PRESIDENT SOUTH FLORIDA VISIT

Vice-President Biden visited South Florida to look at projects that will be helped by Recovery Act funding. Miami-Dade County was fortunate to showcase the Miami Intermodel Center located just adjacent to Miami International Airport. While the site is still under construction the Vice President commended the County for its efforts to create jobs and stimulate the economy. One of Miami-Dade County Transit's brand new hybrid buses was the backdrop of a Press event held at the site. The Vice President toured the bus. Representing the County at the Press event were Mayor Carlos Alvarez, Commission Chairman Dennis C. Moss, Commissioners Barbara Jordan, Sally Heyman and Katy Sorenson.

## FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER FORUM

U.S. Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL) hosted a First-Time Homebuyer Forum at Miami Dade College in Miami, FL. The seminar provided information about down payment assistance programs, applying for a FHA loan, first-time homebuyer tax credits, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, buying a HUD home, and credit counseling. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development joined the Senator to assist the residents attending the forum.

## APPROPRIATIONS

Miami-Dade County has secured over \$100 million dollars in FY '09 appropriations bill. Thanks to the heavy lifting of our Congressional Delegation and the advocacy work of the County's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Washington consultants, funding for some of Miami-Dade County's critical projects are receiving federal dollars.

\$10,043,000 for Miami River Dredging  
\$20,000,000 for Metrorail Orange Line Expansion  
\$478,000 for Miami Harbor Channel Dredging  
\$475,000 for Bus Procurement  
\$200,000 for JAC National Demonstration Project  
\$239,000 for Biscayne Bay Water Quality Assessment Model  
\$81,600,000 for US SOUTHCOM Headquarters Construction (increment #2)

TOTAL FY2009 FUNDING FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY: \$113,035,000

## MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT – MORTGAGE FRAUD ISSUE:

Congressman Kendrick Meek reintroduced the mortgage fraud task force bill in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress on January 14<sup>th</sup>, as is the requirement when a new Congress convenes. The bill became known as H.R. 529, and has been referred to the

## MORTGAGE FRAUD ISSUE: (continued)

House Committee on the Judiciary. In early February, Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz became cosponsors.

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Senator Bill Nelson introduced a complementary bill, which became known as S. 365. This bill was read twice and referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary for further consideration.

Subsequently, H.R.1106 legislation to prevent mortgage foreclosures and enhance mortgage credit availability, sponsored by Rep. Conyers, Jr. was introduced and passed by the House with amendments on March 3, 2009. The bill was then referred to the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. This bill has a provision to include Mortgage Fraud, specifically the Nationwide Mortgage Fraud Task Force Act of 2009 - that establishes in the Department of Justice the Nationwide Mortgage Fraud Task Force to address mortgage fraud in the United States.

This bill's language requires the Task Force to: (1) establish federal, state, and local coordinating entities to organize initiatives to address mortgage fraud; (2) provide training to federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies with respect to mortgage fraud; (3) collect and disseminate data with respect to mortgage fraud; and (4) perform other functions determined by the Attorney General to enhance the detection of, prevention of, and response to mortgage fraud in the United States. Additionally it authorizes the Task Force to initiate and coordinate federal mortgage fraud investigations and, through the coordinating entities, state and local investigations; establish a toll-free hotline for reporting mortgage fraud and providing the public with access to related information and resources; create a database about suspensions and revocations of mortgage industry licenses

## **MORTGAGE FRAUD ISSUE: (continued)**

and certifications to facilitate the sharing of such information by states; and to make recommendations and propose federal, state, and local government legislation.

## **HOUSING UPDATE**

OIA briefed Miami-Dade County's Community Relations Board's committee on housing issues at the national level. Funding through the economic stimulus was discussed as well as the President's housing initiatives. In the stimulus package the following funding amounts have been allocated to housing:

- \$2.5 billion for the *Public Housing Capital Fund* for Public Housing Authorities to make critical repairs and improvements to public housing units and improve living conditions for residents;
- \$4.5 billion of the *Public Housing Operating Fund* for maintenance, crime prevention and energy costs;
- \$16.8 billion for *Section 8 Tenant Based Vouchers* to continue providing 1.9 million vouchers for individuals and families with homes and to 14,000 new, targeted vouchers for the disabled and homeless veterans during the housing crisis;
- \$7.1 billion for *Section 8 Project Based Vouchers* to provide affordable housing to 1.3 million low-income families and individuals;
- \$765 million to rehabilitate and build housing for low-income elderly people;
- \$250 million for grants to buy, rehabilitate and build housing for disabled people;
- \$1.7 billion for *Homeless Assistance Grants* to be distributed to local communities in order to provide housing and services for the homeless;
- \$181 million for the *Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation* to be used for counseling families in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure.
- \$75 million for *Veterans Affairs Housing Vouchers* in order to provide 10,000 vouchers for homeless veterans.
- \$120 million for *HOPE VI* to provide competitive grants to revitalize neighborhoods with deteriorating public housing projects, including demolition of public housing and construction of mixed-income housing.

## **PRESIDENT'S HOMEOWNER AFFORDABILITY AND STABILITY PLAN**

Late last month, President Obama announced his multibillion-dollar Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan to curtail home foreclosure across the country. The plan has a three pronged strategy:

- 1) Refinancing for up to 5 million responsible homeowners to make their mortgages more affordable;
- 2) A \$75 billion Homeowner Stability Initiative to reach up to 4 million at-risk homeowners; and
- 3) Supporting low mortgage rates by strengthening confidence in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

- According to the Administration, low-cost refinancing could reduce mortgage payments by thousands of dollars each year. The Homeowner Stability Initiative will help those who remain living in their homes by providing families with security and neighborhoods with stability.
- The initiative would stabilize home prices through providing incentives for lenders to refinance existing mortgages in order to avoid foreclosure. The last prong would use funds authorized by Congress in 2008 to increase funding to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to ensure the strength and security of the mortgage market and help maintain mortgage affordability.

## **MIAMI-DADE ELIGIBLE FOR OVER \$12 MILLION IN EECBG FUNDING**

Miami-Dade County is eligible for formula funding and is set to receive \$12,523,700.00 under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 appropriated \$3.2 billion for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. The Program provides federal grants to units of local government, Indian tribes, states, and territories to reduce energy use and fossil fuel emissions, and for improvements in energy efficiency.

The EECBG Program is administered by the Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs in the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The announcement comes as a victory for the county, and the effort to fund EECBG was spearheaded by Commissioner Natacha Seijas, who passed a BCC resolution in support of EECBG funding, initiated a letter writing campaign to House and Senate leadership in support of such funding, and helped build coalition support of the program among county

## **MIAMI-DADE ELIGIBLE FOR OVER \$12 MILLION IN EECBG FUNDING (continued)**

and city officials from across the country during numerous national climate change meetings.

### **GREEN PROCUREMENT**

Congressman Kendrick Meek introduced H.R. 1766, a bill promoted by Commissioner Sally Heyman and the Miami-Dade County Office of Procurement that would authorize the use of federal supply schedules for the acquisition of environmentally preferable "green" commodities by state and local governments. Commissioner Heyman sponsored a NACo resolution in support of "green procurement", which was passed by her NACo colleagues representing over 3,000 counties at the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference held in DC this month. The resolution had no opposition among the 2,000 participants attending the Legislative Conference – and hopefully adds to the growing nationwide support for opening up GSA schedules for green procurement/green access.

### **PORT OF MIAMI**

OIA and Port Director Bill Johnson held meetings in Washington, DC. to discuss recent developments regarding Phase III Dredging at the Port of Miami. The Director met with Joe Szabat, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Assistant Secretary for Army Corps John Paul Woodley, and Geoff Bowman, staff member for the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee under the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

### **PANAMA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

OIA attended the Latin America Trade Coalition meeting with the Panamanian Ambassador to the United States Federico Humbert. An important aspect of the meeting was the discussion on the Free Trade Agreement in Congress between the United States and Panama.

### **ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE**

OIA continues to monitor changes and updates to the federal economic stimulus package requirements and regulations. The Obama administration plans to impose more reporting requirements on federal agencies dispensing economic stimulus funds. Appearing before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, OMB Deputy Director Rob Nabors said his agency will issue guidelines soon that will require more deep and frequent reporting of the details of contract and subcontract recipients of stimulus funds. The enhanced requirements will address concerns about the ability of government watchdogs to track stimulus money as it

## **ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE (continued)**

flows from federal agencies to contractors, subcontractors and grantees. Preliminary rules circulated by OMB Director Orszag in February called for disclosure of primary grant and contract recipients but did not require tracking the funds to ground level where local contractors, school districts or other entities put the money to use. For the \$60 billion in federal contracts and \$300 billion in grants doled out from stimulus coffers, agencies will be required to submit information on the prime recipient of funds and any subrecipients tapped to work on projects. Information about contractors hired to execute nearly \$40 billion in highway and transit projects, for example, will be disclosed to OMB, processed and posted on the Recovery.gov website. As of this week, agencies have obligated over \$28 billion in Recovery Act funds and have announced a total of \$151 billion in formula and block grants to states. The administration's goal of spending 70 percent of the money allocated in the stimulus bill within 18 months of its enactment is within reach.

### **MIAMI DADE FIRE RESCUE**

OIA met with the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and Miami-Dade County GSA to discuss the steps taken by the County and Fire Department to purchase property from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. OIA continues working with the office of Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart in order to introduce legislation that will give the USDA the ability to convey the 2 acre land to the County. The County is moving forward on this request by ordering a DERM Environmental Status Report and survey specifications in order to move the process forward. MDFR hopes to introduce the legislation within the coming weeks with the support of our Congressional Delegation.

### **POLICE, PARKS AND RECREATION, AND JUVENILE SERVICES ECONOMIC STIMULUS STRATEGY**

OIA met with Director Robert Parker of the Miami-Dade Police Department, Director Wansley Walters of the Juvenile Services Department, and Director Jack Kardys of the Parks and Recreation Department in order to discuss collaborative efforts in order to maximize funding opportunities for all 3 departments. The meeting was extremely successful as the Directors agreed to work together in order to provide better services for our youths. OIA will continue to work with our department director's in order to strategize on different funding mechanisms that can benefit Miami-Dade County.

## **CHILDREN'S ISSUES**

OIA met with the County's Children Advocate Ali Imran and Special Assistant to the County Manager Irene Taylor-Wooten to discuss children's issues of importance to the County. Among the items discussed was the need to advocate for the re-establishment of the White House Conference on Children and Families; to expand the use of Title IV-E funding; to restore the Social Services Block Grant Funding (SSBG) to no less than the \$2.3 billion provided in 1996 and funding the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) at the authorized level of \$280 million; to support any federal regulation to support states ability to convert their current kinship programs to Title IV-E kinship programs improving access to more families to this program; and for increased access to health care for children in poverty and also for youths exiting foster care by extending the coverage of Medicaid from 18 to 21 years of age.

## **HAITI TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS**

Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, along with Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, asked President Obama to promptly grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haitian nationals living in the United States in the wake of the destruction caused by the string of storms that have hit Haiti last hurricane season. TPS is meant to provide work permits and a safe haven to nationals from a foreign country that are present in the United States until it is safe for them to return to their country. The letter states, "A U.S. State Department travel warning issued in January illustrates the hazardous nature of the situation in Haiti. The State Department warning specifically cited the "destructive impact" of the storms when warning of travel to Haiti. The letter from our Congressional Delegation came as the BCC again passed a resolution in strong support of granting Haitian TPS. OIA will continue to work with our Congressional Delegation to promote the granting of Haitian TPS by the Obama Administration. Early last month the entire South Florida Congressional Delegation held a meeting with the new Administration on the importance of providing TPS to Haitians.

## **CULTURAL AFFAIRS TESTIFIES IN WASHINGTON**

OIA attended a hearing with the Director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs Michael Spring who testified before Congress. The Director testified before the House Education and Labor Committee's hearing to demonstrate how the economy is affecting jobs in the arts and music industries, and the role these industries play in communities across the country. Recent news reports

## **CULTURAL AFFAIRS TESTIFIES IN WASHINGTON (continued)**

have highlighted the tough economic realities arts and music organizations are facing as many are cutting budgets and programs that are the engine of the local economy and provide meaningful employment opportunities for workers. According to research conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, unemployment in the arts was far higher than the overall workforce in 2008. During the testimony, Miami-Dade County was recognized as having one of the leading cultural arts program in the country, which stimulates the local economy and serves as a national model.

## **DREAM ACT**

Congressmen Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Howard Berman, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, announced the reintroduction of the DREAM Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation will restore the States' rights to determine residency requirements for higher education benefits – giving states the option to provide in-state tuition. The American DREAM Act seeks to facilitate access to postsecondary educational opportunities for immigrant students in the United States who currently face barriers in pursuing a college education. It also provides a path to U.S. legal residency for students, and military personnel.

## **WATER AND SEWER DEPARTMENT**

OIA and the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department held meetings in Washington, DC with the Florida Congressional Delegation. Discussed at the meetings were issues pertaining to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). The DWSRF provides a source of much needed loans for water utilities to repair and replace aging drinking water infrastructure and to comply with new standards as well as security-related improvements at the facilities. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loans help local communities meet water quality standards, repair and replace old and decaying pipelines and treatment plants, and ensure continued progress in restoring the health and safety of America's water bodies.

## **MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

OIA, Ana Sotorrio, and Tony Quintero of Miami International Airport held meetings in Washington, DC to support the efforts of the Florida Airport Council and the American Association of Airport Executives. During the

## **MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (continued)**

week, MIA officials attended a summit that included speakers from the Department of Transportation, Department of Homeland Security, and Hill staffers. In addition, we also met with offices of the South Florida Congressional Delegation to discuss issues such as reimbursement for the EDS baggage system at the airport in also the airport's appropriation requests.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

OIA joined Climate Communities and ICLEI USA on a conference call to discuss an overview of two energy bond programs, the Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREB) worth \$1.6 billion and the Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds worth \$2.4 billion. CREBs are tax credit bonds that offer electric cooperatives and public power systems the equivalent of an interest-free loan for financing qualified energy projects for a limited term. Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds are tax credit bonds are allocated to states and large local governments to finance a variety of clean energy projects.

Also discussed with the Department of Energy's Ronald Shaw was stimulus funding available for local weatherization programs. DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program enables communities to help low-income families permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. The new economic stimulus bill provides \$5 billion in formula weatherization grants to be handed down to the states, which subsequently allocate the funds to local weatherization agencies.

OIA continues to monitor legislation updates on issues concerning climate change and health care. Of concern are reports of a bloc of Senate Democratic moderates who are considering vetoing two of President Barack Obama's agenda items this year, climate change and health care reform. Eight Democrats want to change new climate change legislation and signed a letter opposing any attempt to use fast-track budget rules to prevent filibusters and oppose using those budget rules to prevent filibusters of health care legislation. Without those fast-track rules known as reconciliation, the odds of passing either of Obama's top two priorities becomes difficult. Under reconciliation, just 51 votes are needed to pass key budget priorities, rather than the 60 votes usually required under regular order. Senators from energy-producing states including West Virginia and Louisiana are worried new carbon taxes could be forced through Congress.

## **SENATOR INOUYE COUNTY VISIT**

Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) spoke to the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce on Small Business initiatives through the economic stimulus, the President's Small Business plan and recent legislation. Vice Chairman Jose Pepe Diaz and Commissioner Katy Sorenson represented Miami-Dade County at the forum. Senator Inouye is the new Chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriation Committee, replacing Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) as Chairman earlier this year.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

OIA, Director of Parks and Recreation Jacks Kardys, and Assistant Director Allison Diego briefed Members of the South Florida Congressional Delegation and other interested organizations on the County's 50 year Master Plan, the importance of greenways and bikeways in addition to the need for federal funding to combat child obesity and assist our injured veterans. The group also met with Climate Communities, the Department of Interior, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Association of Counties. The Parks Service and the Forest Service both applauded the efforts of Miami-Dade County and its Parks Department. The Forest Service Director encouraged Miami to apply for its Legacy Grant and its Energy and Conservation Block Grant. They strongly suggested working with state-wide liaisons to access federal funds. During individual meetings with the members of Miami-Dade's Congressional delegation, we discussed a number of Parks' needs. All members of the Miami-Dade County Delegation were greatly supportive of the Parks programs and funding request.

## **MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

OIA and the Miami-Dade Police Department have been consistently working with the South Florida Congressional delegation on many issues regarding national security. Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Congressman Kendrick Meek, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart sent a letter to the Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano in support of the Police Department's application for funding under Operation Stonegarden. Additional funding from the Department of Homeland Security under this specific grant will increase the number of qualified, well equipped law enforcement

## **FARM BILL RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA PROGRAM**

OIA continues to look for possible alternative funding sources for Miami-Dade County. For example, the 2008 Farm Bill's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) added a new Energy Audit and Technical Assistance program to REAP. Under this program, state, local and tribal governments, universities, rural electric cooperatives and public power entities can apply to the USDA to receive grants to implement energy technical assistance programs to benefit agricultural producers and rural small businesses. The program will cut energy waste, help farmers and businesses produce their own renewable energy and improve the bottom line of farm and rural business operations. The Omnibus budget bill signed into law this month provides \$60 million in funding for 2009 for the Farm Bill's Rural Energy for American Program (REAP). REAP offers grants and loan guarantees to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to install renewable energy systems or energy efficiency improvements. Although the Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 did not boost funding for farm bill energy title programs, the addition of this funding by Congress carries through on commitments in the 2008 Farm Bill. This year, based on likely REAP funding, we expect that up to \$2.4 million will be available nationwide under this REAP program. The maximum grant per applicant is \$100,000, and the deadline to apply for grants is June 10, 2009. This energy technical assistance program is for government and rural electric cooperative/private power entities. Copies of the grant have been sent to the Agricultural Manager at OSBM.

## **OLDER AMERICANS**

Vice-President Joe Biden announced that the Department of Health and Human Services will award \$100 million in Recovery Act funding to provide meals to tens of thousands of low-income older Americans in need. The funding is expected to provide nearly 14 million meals nationwide. The Recovery Act provides \$65 million for congregate nutrition services provided at senior centers and other community sites, \$32 million for home delivered nutrition services delivered to frail elders at home and \$3 million for Native American nutrition programs. The funding will be awarded to states, territories, tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. States will award the funds to organizations that provide nutrition services in their communities. OIA will monitor distribution of such funds to Florida and Miami-Dade County, as meals for the elderly are of great concern to the county.

## **BEACH RENOURISHMENT**

Through the continuous work of Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will start work on a project to restore thirty feet of beach at Bal Harbour. In addition, OIA, DERM, and Congresswomen Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Debbie Wasserman Schultz are working to locate federal funds that will jump start Miami-Dade County's \$17 million federally authorized beach renourishment project. The South Florida Congressional Delegation members have been in touch with Assistant Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers John Paul Woodley about the importance of beach renourishment in Miami-Dade County and hope to have news as to funding before the Easter recess.

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (NACO)**

OIA joined Commissioners Seijas and Sorenson for NACO's Legislative Conference. Commissioner Heyman, while not attending the conference, sponsored three resolutions - one on Mortgage Fraud - one on Green Procurement and one on the Youth Promise Act. The Mortgage Fraud and Green Procurement Resolutions passed. The Youth Promise Act was tabled due to an existing policy in place

## **TUNNEL**

OIA's federal coordinators working collaboratively with the State Intergovernmental coordinators reached out to the South Florida Congressional Delegation to brief them on the status of the Port Tunnel project at the state level. Additionally, during a recent visit to Washington, Port director, Bill Johnson also briefed the Members of the on-going efforts at the state level to make this project a reality. Commissioner Rolle introduced legislation that passed the County Commission urging President Obama's Administration and Congress to provide funding for the Port of Miami Tunnel Project through the Economic Stimulus Package

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