

**Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez**  
**Remarks for**  
**Internal Management and Fiscal Responsibility Committee Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 12, 2011**

Good afternoon, Madam Chairwoman and Committee members. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak; I understand that you've got work to do – I've got plenty on my plate at the moment, too – so I'll do my best to keep these remarks brief.

As you know, I've been in office for less than two weeks now. In that time, my focus has been almost exclusively on putting together a comprehensive budget for fiscal year 2011-12.

Crafting a budget is never an easy process and the condensed timeline that I'm working in has only added to the challenge. Nonetheless, I can tell you with confidence that I'll be presenting you and your colleagues with a budget in short order. In fact, one major plank of the budget – and one which will affect the livelihoods of many of our county public servants – was released yesterday, and is a sign of things to come.

Understand that the choices that I am faced with are difficult ones and that I take no pleasure in making them – I know that they impact our employees and their families. The reality, however, is that for too long now, the residents that we serve have been making sacrifices, adjusting their lifestyles, and tightening belts within their own households in order to survive this economic storm.

It's time that we as a government do the same. It's time for all of us to make a shared sacrifice for the greater good.

Doing so will allow this organization to return to the efficient delivery of core services to residents and visitors while protecting vital programs for our most vulnerable residents – the elderly and children. To that end, and in keeping with my pledge, I have identified funding to continue the \$100 rebate program for senior citizens and *Seniors First*, a fund that protects meal programs for the elderly.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, the tough decision that I made yesterday that will impact so many of our workers is just the beginning – much more needs to be done to get this fiscal house in order.

I'll be more direct: the massive double-digit property tax rate hike that my predecessor spearheaded last year – and which I voted against as a Commissioner – must be rolled back. That tax rate hike came at precisely the time that our residents were adjusting their own living and spending habits to conform to this challenging economic reality.

Rolling back last year's tax increase, that was heaped on the backs of the residents that we serve, will allow us to get this year's budget on sure footing; and it will allow for this organization's long-term viability.

In my short time in office, I've done my best to make myself accessible to you as Commissioners and will continue to make this budget process as transparent as possible. To date, I've had the chance to meet with most of you individually to discuss the budget and gather your input, and I will have met with all Commissioners by tomorrow afternoon. Shortly after those meetings conclude, I will be releasing the FY 2011-12 budget.

When I roll out the budget tomorrow, you'll be able to delve into all of the details. Until then, I'll tell you this about it: what you see is what you get. There aren't gimmicks, there's certainly no sugar coating, it is what it is. Again, we need to make these difficult decisions. Failure to act on our part now will be far worse – and far more damaging – in the long-run than making these hard decisions now.

Let me say this, too: while we face a multitude of tough choices, there is at least one consequential decision to be made that I believe will be well received: my budget proposes that we lower the millage rate. In simplest terms, this rate decrease means that every homeowner in Miami-Dade County can expect their county property taxes to go down this year.

Specifically, and in keeping with a pledge that I made to our residents, I am proposing that the FY 2011-12 combined millage rate be set at 9.7405, the same combined millage rate as FY 2009-10.

Lowering the millage rate is an absolute 'must,' given the economic challenges that so many of our residents are now confronted with, but it can't be achieved without shared sacrifices by the public servants who make up this organization.

Madam Chairwoman, I'm close to wrapping up. Before I do, though, I want to let you all know that I'll be working hard in the coming weeks to inform our residents of our budget efforts here at County Hall. I intend to hold a series of townhall meetings so that the people we serve have a clear understanding of the actions that we're taking and what impact those actions will have on the services that they benefit from. I encourage you to join me at these important outreach sessions.

With that, I'll leave you to your important business and get back to work myself. Thank you for your time.