

Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez
Remarks for
Proposed Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Budget News Conference
Wednesday, July 13, 2011, 6:00 p.m.

Good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for joining me here at County Hall.

As you know, I'm here today to officially unveil the Fiscal Year 2011-12 budget. My primary focus in the twelve short days that I've been in office has been on putting this document together. I'm rolling out the budget today – rather than on Friday – to allow the board of county Commissioners as much time as possible to digest the details before they meet to set the millage rate next week.

Crafting a budget is never an easy process and the choices that I have been faced with in recent days are difficult ones.

I fully understand that they will impact our residents, as well as our public servants and their families.

Muy buenas tardes - hoy estoy presentando el presupuesto fiscal del condado para el nuevo año.

a sido un proceso muy difícil, lleno de decisiones que afectarán a nuestros residentes, y también a nuestros trabajadores y sus familias. Pero como prometí en mi campaña, estoy reduciendo los impuestos por más de 200 millones de dólares, bajando las tasas de impuesto a la propiedad, y eliminando casi 1,300 posiciones.

This year's County budget reflects the sobering economic realities that our region is currently facing, and it calls on our public servants to make a shared sacrifice for the greater good of our residents and the organization itself.

This budget meets many of the pledges that I made to our residents.

I promised to lighten the burden on homeowners and small businesses – this budget cuts taxes by more than \$200 million, undoing last year's rate increases. I promised to hold true to our critical missions – this budget protects seniors, children and public safety. I promised to shrink government – this budget eliminates nearly 1,300 positions.

For too long now, the residents that we serve have been making financial 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.

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.

Earlier this week, County workers under my purview were informed that their health benefits contribution will increase by 5%. This is a positive first step, and I'm grateful for their shared sacrifice, but more must be done to get this fiscal house in order.

En tiempos recientes, nuestros residentes han estado haciendo sacrificios monetarios y tomando decisiones difíciles en sus vidas diarias. Ahora, es tiempo para que nuestro gobierno haga exactamente lo mismo.

Si hacemos estos sacrificios compartidos ahora, lograremos seguir protegiendo y ofreciendo los servicios esenciales a nuestros residentes.

I've met with some of our union partners and balancing this budget will require significant concessions and shared sacrifice. I'm eager to begin negotiations with them and know that they understand that economic reality will dictate the terms.

Let me take a few moments now to highlight some major points in this budget.

First, and as I mentioned at the outset, the budget includes over \$200 million in tax cuts. It calls for the double-digit property tax rate hike passed last year – which I voted against as a Commissioner – to be rolled back.

This roll back will ease the heavy financial burden that was heaped on the backs of residents.

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

Second, this budget fulfills my pledge to preserve essential services, such as public safety and programs for seniors. This budget does not reduce public safety levels of service. Furthermore, I have identified funding to continue the \$100 rebate program for senior citizens and funds that protect meal programs for the elderly.

Lastly, this budget calls for the elimination of nearly 1,300 positions, of which approximately 500 are vacant. These cuts are undoubtedly among the toughest decisions that I have had to make. While they will not affect the level of service of public safety, they clearly represent a significant adjustment to the County workforce.

Along with cuts in personnel, we have had to assess our priorities in order to make tough choices and cut some services. Unfortunately, our County Library System will be affected. Sunday hours and extended evening hours have been eliminated at the regional libraries. Thirteen branch locations will be closed. This decision was based on a thorough policy analysis that included proximity to other library locations and door counts. We will offset these service reductions using bookmobiles that will reach affected neighborhoods.

Additionally, we are working with business leaders in the community to develop a program for the private sector to support some of these functions in conjunction with the organization - *Friends of the Library*.

The Head Start childcare program, currently administered by the Community Action Agency, will continue, but the County will no longer run the services. Again, there will not be a reduction in service – this decision was made to reduce costs, while ensuring the continued level of service to the children.

In the coming weeks, I'll be working hard to inform our residents of the budget actions that we are taking and what impact those actions will have on the services that they benefit from.

These outreach efforts will begin tomorrow at 7:00 P.M. with a Facebook townhall meeting, and will be followed by a series of traditional townhall meetings throughout the County.

Before I conclude and move on to questions, I'd like to thank my staff, as well as all of the department staff here at the County, who have helped me put this budget together. It has been a sprint.

Para mantener servicios esenciales, tenemos que cortar o eliminar varios programas. Nuestras bibliotecas estarán afectadas, pero estamos tomando medidas para reducir el impacto que tendrá en nuestra comunidad.

También, el programa Head Start no será operado por la agencia del condado. Sin embargo, este programa va a seguir sirviendo a los niños en nuestra comunidad.

En las semanas que vienen, los invito a una serie de reuniones públicas donde voy a discutir los detalles y efectos de este presupuesto.

In closing, I'll say this about the 2011-12 budget:

what you see is what you get.

There's no sugar coating.

It is what it is.

With that, I'll open the floor to questions.