



CARLOS A. GIMENEZ

MAYOR  
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

March 30, 2012

Dear Residents,

One of my responsibilities as Mayor as outlined in the County Charter is that I deliver a budget address each year to you, the residents, and inform you of my budget priorities for the upcoming year.

Before I do that, I want to take this opportunity to discuss how we reached our current position. In conversations with so many of you last summer, it was clear that you wanted to see your taxes slashed, the County budget reduced, and essential services maintained. I heard you loud and clear and in just a few short months, we were able to put the County's fiscal house back in order.

The FY 2011-12 Budget rolled back taxes to FY 2009-10 levels, reducing your property taxes by more than \$200 million. The overall County budget was reduced by over \$1 billion; over 1,000 positions were eliminated; and we protected public safety, along with programs that serve our most vulnerable residents – the elderly and children. That budget required County government to make difficult, but necessary sacrifices just like so many families in our community have had to do in recent years.

As for the coming budget year, your priorities remain my priorities going forward: no tax increase, preserving essential services, protecting critical programs for our most vulnerable residents and maintaining public safety for our entire community.

When our current budget was developed last summer, it was done as a two-year plan, so that current property tax rates and fee levels carry us through the coming fiscal year. Both years assumed that we would be able to attain the necessary concessions from our labor unions, that our local economy does not further falter, or that new state or federal mandates are not imposed.

With the shared sacrifice of our employees, and the support of the Board of County Commissioners, we have successfully negotiated collective bargaining agreements with all of our labor unions. However, the Board of County Commissioners imposed the additional healthcare contribution for only one year, so my administration must be proactive in meeting with the unions to address this issue for the upcoming year.

While our economy remains fragile, there are encouraging signs. Unemployment numbers, while still not where we want them to be, have dropped over the past year. Our hospitality industry continues to be our strength. Sales of consumer goods remain steady. However, the County, like you, is concerned about rising fuel costs and the effect this has on many of our

departments. Overall, we are optimistic about the future of our organization and our community, but we remain cognizant that a full recovery will take time.

The legislative session that just concluded in Tallahassee has also presented us with unexpected budgetary challenges, the biggest being HB5301 regarding Miami-Dade County's Medicaid contributions. We estimate the fiscal impact to be approximately \$31 million, of which \$6 million to \$8 million may be in the upcoming budget year.

We must also think long-term. Ensuring that Miami-Dade County is a place where people want to invest – both personally and through business development – is essential for our community's future. Fundamental to this goal is the reorganization of County government. Reducing the number of departments from 42 to 26 was only the first step of the reorganization. We are transforming Miami-Dade County from a complicated and often functionally redundant organization that our customers found difficult to utilize, into one that delivers services more efficiently and effectively and acts as a catalyst for economic development and job creation, not a roadblock to it.

In the months since our reorganization was approved by the Board of County Commissioners, my administration has been working diligently to review, analyze and identify areas that can produce efficiencies and savings. While we are close to finalizing those figures, we are confident that the savings are significant. More importantly, these savings are recurring so that you, the taxpayers, will continue to benefit for years to come.

While we continue to face challenges in balancing our budget, we will also continue to look for opportunities. As your Mayor, I remain firmly committed to delivering a county government that is financially sustainable, a careful steward of your tax dollars, and provides quality services to you, our residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen P. Clark", written in dark ink on a white background.