

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

**APRIL 1 – APRIL 5, 2013**

**Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Miami-Dade County Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:**

*THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **PRESIDENT MAKES QUICK VISIT TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY – TOUTS NEW INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN**

President Obama visited Miami-Dade County last Friday. The purpose of the visit was to highlight the Administration's ongoing efforts to encourage greater partnership among federal, state/local, and private sector actors to rebuild U.S. infrastructure assets. The President toured the PortMiami tunnel project, which has utilized both public and private resources, as exemplary of the policy initially rolled out in the State of the Union address in February. The President gave brief remarks on the project and about the need for additional infrastructure investment and PPPs.

The \$1.1 billion tunnel project leverages a federally-backed \$341 million loan via the U.S. Department of Transportation's – Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, and will improve access to and from the Port, serving as a dedicated roadway connector linking the Port with the MacArthur Causeway (State Road A1A - which connects Miami to Miami Beach) and I-395 on the mainland. At present, the Port is linked to the mainland only by the Port Bridge. The tunnel will improve access to the Port, thus helping to keep it competitive and efficient, improve traffic safety in downtown Miami by removing cargo trucks and cruise line buses from congested city streets, and facilitate ongoing and future development plans in and around downtown Miami.

### **WHITE HOUSE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN – WHITE PAPER**

Attached, please find the White House fact sheet summarizing the President's plan to attract more private investment for infrastructure projects. The plan was cited during his visit to the County last week and spoke of in the State of the Union Address. From the White House release accompanying the document:

*"The Administration proposes the creation of a new America Fast Forward Bonds program modeled after the Build America Bonds program, but expanded to include certain projects traditionally financed with qualified private activity bonds. The Administration intends for these AFF bonds to complement traditional tax-exempt municipal bonds."*

## **FAA DELAYS CLOSURE OF HUNDREDS OF CONTRACT CONTROL TOWERS, OPA-LOCKA ALREADY SPARED**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced Friday afternoon that it will delay until June 15, the closure of 149 air traffic control towers staffed by contract employees. The FAA had announced in March that the sequester would force the towers to start shutting down this coming Sunday. Among the initial towers slated for shutdown was including Opa-Locka Executive Airport (OPF). OPF is owned by Miami-Dade County and the County's Aviation Department and it serves as an important reliever to Miami International Airport.

Shortly after the announcement, Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) and OIA reached out to the county's House and Senate congressional delegation members to express their concerns about the planned closure and its impact on the region. Last Friday it was announced that OPF would be one of four Florida contract air traffic control towers to receive an exemption and remain open.

The FAA said today's decision to delay the closures outright, would allow for additional time will allow it to address "multiple legal challenges" to the closure decisions.

## **HAITIAN NATIONAL POLICE TO TRAIN AT MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT (H/T REP. ROS-LEHTINEN & HFA PROFESSIONAL STAFF)**

Twenty-one officers from the Haitian National Police Counternarcotics Unit (BLTS) started a three-week "Train the Trainer" course at the Miami-Dade Public Safety Training Institute (MDPSTI) yesterday, April 1. The training covers advanced law enforcement investigation techniques. The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) collaborated on the curriculum, equipment, and logistics for this training. The three-week training aims to enhance the professional skills of the BLTS officers and build their professional network. Miami-Dade instructors will share knowledge and skills with their Haitian counterparts through in-service training at their Public Safety Training Institute. Increasing the capacity and skill of BLTS personnel will improve their abilities to address and combat drug trafficking and drug transshipment in and out of Haiti. In addition to endangering U.S. citizens, the drug trade in Haiti undermines the rule of law in that country by fostering corruption and fomenting armed violence perpetrated by criminal gangs and political opposition groups.

Through leading efforts and coordination by Rep. Ros-Lehtinen (then Chairwoman of the House Foreign Relations Committee) and her Committee staff experts, along with Mayor Gimenez and the BCC, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the Miami-Dade Police Department signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' on November 19, 2012 to cooperate on training, advising, and mentoring international law enforcement personnel. Miami-Dade is one of more than 50

U.S. state and local agency partners from communities around the United States who help foreign law enforcement and judicial officials enhance their civilian security and justice sector capacity. Through these agreements, U.S. partners develop networks of contacts with foreign counterparts that assist them in stemming the tide of illicit drugs and transnational crime that are entering their own communities. Making international law enforcement connections on drug-related and gang-related issues has a long-term impact on cross-border, state-level, and community security.

MDPD is one of the largest police departments in the southeastern United States, with a staff of approximately 4,700 employees. MDPSTI will offer four additional State Department supported training courses to a total of 74 BLTS officers over the course of the calendar year.

## **REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ HOSTS ROUNDTABLE ON BEACH EROSION ISSUES & OTHER EVENTS THROUGHOUT COUNTY**

On Thursday, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz hosted a constituent roundtable at the City of Hallandale Beach Cultural Center. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss both short-term and long-term efforts to resolve beach erosion issues in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Attendees included Col. Allan Dodd, District Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard officials and representatives from the City of Hallandale Beach and Miami-Dade and Broward Counties.

Beach erosion continues to be a top priority for communities in Miami-Dade and throughout South Florida. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and other significant storms, the erosion problem has only intensified. Representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard are provided updates and sought insight from local leaders on how to best work collaboratively on priority projects. OIA will continue to work with the Congresswoman's office, the congressional delegation, RER and federal officials to address this major federal priority for Miami-Dade County and coastal communities throughout Florida.

Rep. Wasserman Schultz also attended events throughout Miami-Dade County during the district work period, including a *Listen up!* event in Miami Beach on Tuesday, a discussion with *Mujeres Latinas* about Obamacare and its potential impact on saving women and families money while improving access to quality, affordable health care, and on Thursday a meeting with employees of the USCIS Miami Field Office to give a federal legislative update and have a discussion about sequester cuts and the need for a balanced plan to reduce federal spending.

## **REP. DIAZ-BALART APPLAUDS TPS EXTENSION TO NICARAGUANS & HONDURANS LIVING IN U.S.**

Earlier today, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart released the following statement following the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible nationals of both Nicaragua and Honduras for an additional 18 months:

*"The recent decision to extend TPS to Nicaraguans and Hondurans will bring relief to the countless individuals of both countries who have sought refuge in the United States. I encourage those who are eligible to begin the application process. TPS was created as a safe haven for foreign nationals, and I am glad that we can continue to provide that environment for Nicaraguans and Hondurans."*

## **REP. GARCIA, COUNTY OFFICIALS AND LOCAL BUSINESS LEADERS HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE AT MIA RE CBP STAFFING SHORTAGE**

On Thursday, Rep. Joe Garcia was joined by county officials and local business leaders to discuss the harmful impacts to South Florida's economy caused by cuts to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at Miami International Airport (MIA). Already faced with limited CBP processing staff, long lines for international passengers at MIA have resulted in up to 1,000 travelers a day missing their connecting flights and further cuts in CBP cargo inspectors will adversely impact local businesses that import perishable goods such as fresh-cut flowers and asparagus.

OIA will continue to work with the Miami-Dade County congressional delegation, industry stakeholders and the Administration to reach a favorable solution regarding the ongoing CBP staffing shortages at the County's ports of entry.

## **SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE HEARING NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS PANAMA CANAL EXPANSION**

The U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will hold a hearing on Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at 2:30 p.m. titled *"Expanding the Panama Canal: What Does it Mean for American Freight and Infrastructure?"*

The hearing will explore how the Panama Canal expansion will change the movement of freight into and throughout the U.S., and explore the public and private infrastructure investment needed to meet these changing freight patterns. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller released the following statement regarding the hearing:

*"The role of the Panama Canal in U.S. trade during the last century cannot be understated,"* said Rockefeller. *"Now that the Panama Canal is being expanded to allow larger vessels, the U.S. needs to develop a comprehensive transportation infrastructure strategy for the next century. An expanded Panama Canal has the potential to transform how freight is moved into and throughout this country. We cannot be caught flat-footed when ships twice the size of current vessels begin to cross from the Pacific to Atlantic Oceans and want to do business with our ports."*

The following witnesses have been announced for the hearing:

### **Witness Panel**

Mr. Phillip Byrd  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Bulldog Hiway Express & First Vice Chairman  
American Trucking Association

Mr. Ed Hamberger  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Association of American Railroads

Mr. Jeff Keever  
Deputy Executive Director  
Virginia Port Authority

Mr. John Vickerman  
Founding Principal  
Vickerman and Associates

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*The week of April 8 – April 12:*

- The House will be in session this week.
- The Senate will be in session this week.

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The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
March 29, 2013

**The “Rebuild America Partnership”: The President’s Plan to Encourage Private Investment in America’s Infrastructure**

Investing in infrastructure not only makes our roads, bridges, and ports safer and gives our businesses and workers the tools to compete successfully in the global economy, it also creates thousands of good American jobs that cannot be outsourced. Since the President took office four years ago, America has begun the hard work of rebuilding our infrastructure: American workers have improved over 350,000 miles of U.S. roads and more than 6,000 miles of rail, and they have repaired or replaced over 20,000 bridges. But there’s more to do, and taxpayers shouldn’t have to shoulder the entire burden themselves.

We know that America works best when it’s calling upon the resources and ingenuity of our vibrant private sector. That’s why the President’s plan calls for a Rebuild America Partnership to help attract the private capital that can go toward building the infrastructure our workers and businesses need most.

By acting on the President’s plan, together we can build an infrastructure that’s second-to-none and prove that there is no better place to do business and create jobs than right here in the United States of America.

• **Partnering with the Private Sector to Create Jobs and Invest in the Projects We Need**

**Most:** The President is continuing to call for Congress to enact a National Infrastructure Bank capitalized with \$10 billion, in order to leverage private and public capital and to invest in a broad range of infrastructure projects of national and regional significance, without earmarks or political influence.

• **Giving State and Local Governments Flexible New Tools to Invest in Infrastructure:** The President’s new America Fast Forward Bonds program will build upon the successful example of the Build America Bonds program, broadening its use to include the types of projects that can be financed with qualified private activity bonds while also making the combined program more flexible. In addition, the Administration is proposing changes to the Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act (FIRPTA) aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of investment in U.S. infrastructure and real estate to a broader universe of private investors.

• **Building the Transportation Network Our Businesses and Workers Need to Succeed:** In addition to the sound implementation of TIFIA’s recent eight-fold expansion, the Administration is also proposing \$4 billion in new competitive funding for the innovative TIGER and TIFIA programs.

*The President's Plan to Attract Private Infrastructure Investment Through a "Rebuild America Partnership"*

*Despite progress over the last four years, too many construction workers remain out of work and too many of our nation's infrastructure needs remain unmet. The President's new "Rebuild America Partnership" will bring together an array of new and existing policies all aimed at enhancing the role of private capital in U.S. infrastructure investment as a vital additive to the traditional roles of Federal, State, and local governments, making American workers and businesses more competitive and putting more Americans back on the job:*

**• Partnering with the Private Sector to Create Jobs and Invest in the Projects We Need**

**Most.** To leverage private and public capital for infrastructure projects showing the greatest merit, the President is continuing to call for the investment of \$10 billion to create and capitalize an independent National Infrastructure Bank (NIB), based on a model that has won bipartisan support from the Senate in the past. Each dollar of Federal funding can leverage up to \$20 in total infrastructure investment, mainly from partners in the private sector and State and local government. The National Infrastructure Bank's key provisions would include:

o Independent, Non-Partisan Operations Led by Infrastructure and Financial Experts: While the NIB would be a government-owned entity, it would operate independently and would have a bipartisan board composed of individuals who possess significant expertise in the financing, development, or operation of infrastructure projects.

o Broad Eligibility for Infrastructure and Unbiased Project Selection: Eligible projects would include transportation infrastructure, water infrastructure, and energy infrastructure. In general, projects would have to be at least \$100 million in size and be of national or regional significance. Projects would need to have a clear public benefit, meet rigorous economic, technical, and environmental standards, and be backed by a dedicated revenue stream. Geographic, sector, and size considerations would also be taken into account.

o Addressing Market Gaps for Infrastructure Financing: The NIB would issue loans and loan guarantees to eligible projects at interest rates approximately equivalent to Treasury securities of similar maturities. Loans could extend to 35 years, giving the NIB the ability to be a "patient" partner side-by-side with State, local, and private co-investors. To maximize leverage from Federal investments, the NIB would finance no more than 50 percent of the total costs of any project.

**• Giving State and Local Governments Flexible New Tools to Invest in Infrastructure.**

Recovery Act funding for "Build America Bonds" (BABs) helped to support more than \$181 billion for new public infrastructure. The President's new America Fast Forward (AFF) Bonds program will build upon the successful example of the BABs program, broadening its use to include the types of projects that can be financed with qualified private activity bonds (PABs) while also making the combined program more flexible. In addition, the

Administration is proposing changes to the Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act (FIRPTA) aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of investment in U.S. infrastructure and real estate to a broader universe of private investors. Taken together, these proposals represent \$7 billion in tax reforms to support infrastructure investment among state and local governments as well as their private sector partners.

o America Fast Forward Bonds: The Recovery Act created the BABs program as an optional new lower cost borrowing incentive for State and local governments on taxable bonds issued in 2009 and 2010 to finance new investments in governmental capital projects. The program's innovative design ensured that States, localities, and their private sector partners receive the best bang-for-the-buck when they finance their investments in new infrastructure. It also enabled them to attract new sources of capital to infrastructure investment — including from public pension funds that do not receive a tax benefit from traditional tax-exempt debt — and brought down interest costs by about 80 basis points on 30-year bonds. Under the original BABs program, the Treasury Department makes direct subsidy payments to State and local governmental issuers in a subsidy amount equal to 35 percent of the coupon interest on the bonds.

The Administration proposes to create a new permanent AFF Bonds program, which would be an optional alternative to traditional tax-exempt bonds. Like BABs, AFF Bonds would be conventional taxable bonds issued by State and local governments in which the Federal government makes direct payments to State and local governmental issuers in a subsidy amount equal to 28 percent of the coupon interest on the bonds. The 28-percent subsidy rate is approximately revenue neutral in comparison to the Federal revenue cost from traditional tax-exempt bonds.

The Administration proposes to include as an eligible use for America Fast Forward Bonds issuance for the types of projects and programs that can be financed with qualified PABs, subject to applicable State bond volume caps for the PABs category.

o Reformed Project Limitations for Qualified Private Activity Bonds: The Administration proposes modifying certain restrictions in the qualified PABs program, in order to encourage greater take-up and infrastructure construction:

- ♣ Increase the national limitation for qualified highway or surface freight transfer facility bonds to \$19 billion from \$15 billion.
- ♣ Eliminate the volume cap for qualified PABs issued for water infrastructure, in an effort to help address what the EPA has estimated is a roughly \$600 billion need for capital investment in wastewater and stormwater as well as drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years.
- ♣ Increase from 25 percent to 35 percent the limitation on the use of proceeds for land acquisition, in order to enable greater PABs usage in areas with high land costs.
- ♣ Permit private ownership of qualified PAB-supported airports, docks and wharves, and mass

commuting facilities, putting these infrastructure categories on an equal footing under the qualified PABs program with other infrastructure types.

o FIRPTA: Infrastructure assets can be attractive investments for long-term investors such as pension funds that value the long-term, predictable, and stable nature of the cash flows associated with infrastructure. Under current law, gains of foreign investors from the disposition of U.S. real property interests are generally subject to U.S. tax under FIRPTA, and foreign investors including large foreign pension funds regularly cite FIRPTA as an impediment to their investment in U.S. infrastructure and real estate assets. With U.S. pension funds generally exempt from U.S. tax upon the disposition of U.S. real property investments, the Administration proposes to put foreign pension funds on an approximately equal footing: exempting their gains from the disposition of U.S. real property interests, including infrastructure and real estate assets, from U.S. tax under FIRPTA.

• **Building the Transportation Network Our Businesses and Workers Need to Succeed.** The Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program — which provides direct loans, loan guarantees, and lines of credit to regionally or nationally significant transportation projects — received an eight-fold increase in funding to \$1 billion in the recent surface transportation reauthorization. Over the past 13 years, TIFIA has entered into 27 loan agreements worth \$10.4 billion, resulting in more than \$41 billion in total project investment. The program, which is especially important to mayors and local leaders, highlights the important role that infrastructure financing can play in catalyzing private investment, and its expansion was a significant step towards more innovative infrastructure financing.

In addition to the sound implementation of TIFIA's recent expansion, the Administration is also proposing \$4 billion in new competitive funding for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) and TIFIA programs in 2014. This additional investment would make new grant and loan funding available for States and localities across the country, giving them both a new source of financing and the flexibility to design projects and financing packages to meet their needs.

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

**APRIL 22 – APRIL 26, 2013**

**Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Miami-Dade County Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:**

*THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **COMMISSIONER MONESTIME JOINS GREATER MIAMI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FLY-IN**

This week, Commissioner Jean Monestime and OIA joined the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce for their annual Washington fly-in. The Chamber met with the county's Congressional delegation as well as officials from the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, State and Homeland Security, among other congressional member and committee staff, as well as Obama Administration officials.

### **HOUSE CLEARS FUNDING MEASURE TO AVERT FAA FURLOUGHS CAUSED BY THE SEQUESTER**

On Friday, the House passed H.R. 1765, by a vote of 361-41, thus transferring \$253 million from the FAA's Airport Improvement Program to the FAA's Operations account to prevent further furloughs of air traffic controllers and (possibly) to prevent the closure of air traffic control towers operated under contract.

The bill is identical to the one passed by the Senate yesterday, meaning H.R. 1765 will go to the White House for President Obama's signature immediately.

The bill moves up to \$253 million from the slow-spending AIP account to the fast-spending Operations account. As a result, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that H.R. 1765/S. 853 would increase the FAA's outgoing cash flow from the Operations account by about \$200 million in fiscal year 2013 but would also lower the outgoing cash flow of the AIP program in subsequent years so that the bill only increases total FAA outlays by \$4 million over a ten-year period.

While the Senate passes its bill unanimously without debate, House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (MD) led spirited opposition to H.R. 1765 on the grounds that it would not do anything to mitigate the effects that sequestration is having on social programs or defense programs. However, most members appeared concerned that a vote against the bill would draw heat from constituents who got stuck with flight delays, so in the end, only 29 Democrats and 12 Republicans voted against the legislation.

*(Information provided by the Akerman Senterfitt Federal Lobbying Team and Transportation Weekly)*

## **GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION BILL STALLS IN THE SENATE**

Last Wednesday, the Senate blocked a gun violence prevention measure that would have expanded background checks for gun buyers. The amendment would have expanded checks to cover all firearms sales at gun shows and over the Internet, but would have exempted sales between friends and acquaintances outside of commercial venues. The vote was 54 in favor to 46 against.

Last week, the Senate voted 68-31 to proceed with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's comprehensive gun violence prevention bill (S. 649). Reid's bill, which he pulled from the Senate floor this week after the amendment was defeated, included legislation that was recently approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee to expand background checks for gun purchases, improve school safety and stop straw purchasing and illegal trafficking in firearms.

Sixty votes were needed to overcome the filibuster. There had been some optimism that the bill would be able to pass the Senate after the initial procedural vote that overcame a potential filibuster.

## **REP. GARCIA INTRODUCES SAFE ID ACT TO CURB TAX ID FRAUD**

Congressmen Joe Garcia and Trey Radel teamed up last week to combat identity theft and tax fraud and protect families. The two Florida lawmakers introduced the bipartisan SAFE ID Act, which would amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow for any taxpayer identification number (TIN), including a truncated social security number, to be used on a taxpayer's W-2 form, rather than the presently required social security number.

This is not the first attempt by Florida law makers to curb tax ID fraud. Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz previously introduced the STOP Identity Theft Act of 2013 which calls for the Attorney General to: make use of all existing resources of the Department of Justice, including task forces, to bring more perpetrators of tax return identity theft to justice; and take into account the need to concentrate efforts in areas of the country where the crime is most frequently reported, to coordinate with state and local authorities to prosecute and prevent such crime, and to protect vulnerable groups from becoming victims or otherwise being used in the offense. Senator Nelson also introduced the Identity Theft and Tax Fraud Prevention Act of 2013 as well as Rep. Cathy Castor of Tampa who introduced the Tax Crimes and Identity Theft Prevention Act.

*"Having met with victims of tax fraud, I know the burden and the suffering it causes them and their families," said Rep. Garcia. "The SAFE ID Act is a bipartisan, common-sense bill that protects families by making it harder for identity thieves to commit tax ID fraud. With Florida leading the nation in tax identity fraud, I am proud to be working with my colleague, Rep. Trey Radel, to address this serious issue."*

### **Background Information on SAFE ID Act:**

Drawing on a well-received pilot program created by the IRS, the SAFE ID Act amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow for any taxpayer identification number (TIN) to be used on a taxpayer's W-2 form, rather than only a Social Security number.

By changing this provision, employers will also be able to list a truncated version of the individuals TIN on a W-2 to further protect a taxpayer's identity from being stolen.

Why this is Important to Florida

- Nine of the ten top cities for tax-ID fraud are in Florida. Protecting a taxpayer's identity is critical to ensure that they get their tax refunds and that their credit is protected.
- Miami has 46 times the per-capita rate of false tax refund claims than the rest of the country, and 70 times the national average in dollar terms.
- There were 35,914 identity theft complaints from South Floridians in 2012.

## **IMMIGRATION REFORM BILL INCHES FORWARD**

Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy (VT)'s Judiciary Committee has held a series of hearings on the Senate "Gang of 8's" immigration reform proposal. Leading up to the hearings and the introduction of the legislation, Sen. Marco Rubio promoted the "Gang of 8" immigration deal on an unprecedented seven Sunday shows two weeks ago, and has been out in front of potential opposition to the bill from immigration reform opponents who oppose the bill.

Last week, the Gang of 8 released the text of its 844-page immigration reform bill (if anyone would like a copy of the bill or a summary please contact OIA). The bill authorizes 4.5 billion for heightened border security measures, including hiring more border control agents, and creates a pathway to citizenship conditional on strengthened border security.

- Undocumented immigrants who immigrated to the US before December 31, 2011 and who have maintained a continuous presence since then will be able to apply for Registered Provisional Immigrant Status (RPI) only after the Department of Homeland Security has begun implementing strengthened border security strategies.
- Except for agricultural workers and those eligible for the DREAM Act, those with RPI legal status will not be able to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status until the Secretary of Homeland Security has certified that certain border security benchmarks have been met, including the implementation of a mandatory employment verification system and a 90 percent effectiveness rate at halting illegal border crossings.
- After receiving RPI status, immigrants must wait 10 years before adjusting to Lawful Permanent Resident Status. However, agricultural workers and those eligible for the DREAM Act will be eligible for green cards five years after they receive RPI status, with those eligible for the DREAM Act able to apply for citizenship immediately after they get their green cards.

*(Information provided by the Greenberg Traurig Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **BIPARTISAN GROUP OF HOUSE MEMBERS RELEASE STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM**

A bipartisan group of eight Members from the U.S. House of Representatives, including Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, released the following statement regarding their efforts for comprehensive reform of the U.S. immigration system:

*“Americans want to see the nation’s broken immigration system fixed, and they know it will take bipartisanship to solve this problem in a sensible and rational way. This week, a bipartisan group of Senators stepped forward to introduce their proposal, and we applaud their effort. We are also working on a good faith, bipartisan effort in the House. We believe we will soon agree on a reasonable, common-sense plan to finally secure our borders and strengthen our economy, with a tough but fair process that respects the rule of law so immigrants can contribute to our country. While we have made substantial progress, we continue to work diligently towards a bill that keeps America strong, competitive and true to our values.”*

— Reps. Xavier Becerra (CA), John Carter (TX), Mario Diaz-Balart (FL), Luis Gutierrez (IL), Sam Johnson (TX), Raul Labrador (ID), Zoe Lofgren (CA), and John Yarmuth (KY)

## **FLORIDA PORTS CAUCUS HOLDS INAUGURAL MEMBERS’ MEETING**

Chaired by Congresswoman Frederica Wilson, the Florida Ports Caucus focus is on boosting Florida’s exports and creating maritime jobs.

With the expansion of the Panama Canal, the upcoming reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and the start of major infrastructure upgrades at Florida Ports across the state and nation, this is a crucial time for Florida’s 15 seaports and the numerous industries that rely on them. The inaugural meeting of the Florida Ports Caucus served as an opportunity to discuss ongoing and needed port improvements, to learn about the status of the WRDA bill, and to explore opportunities for delegation-wide collaboration on maritime issues.

The caucus discussed Army Corps of Engineers Projects and issues in Florida and were joined by Jeffrey McKee, Navigation Branch, US Army Corps of Engineers; John Anderson, Majority Professional Staff, Water Resources Subcommittee; Dave Wegner, Minority Professional Staff, Water Resources Subcommittee; John Frittelli and Charlie Stern both from the Congressional Research Service.

## **COUNTY’S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION INTRODUCES BILL TO HELP LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES**

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, along with her South Florida colleagues Mario Diaz-Balart, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Frederica Wilson and Joe Garcia re-introduced legislation that would give cities greater flexibility to use funds from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for public services programs that have decreased because of budget cuts and the recent economic downturn.

The legislation “CDBG Public Services Flexibility Act” was introduced Thursday, in the House and also in the Senate by Senator Bill Nelson. The bill intends to provide communities with greater flexibility to use funds from CDBG for public services. It does not increase funding or change the overall formula for the CDBG programs, but rather it increases the CDBG public service percentage expenditure for participating communities from 15 to 25 percent.

*Said Ros-Lehtinen, “During times of budget cutbacks and weak economic growth, the most impacted segment in our communities are the ones that need the most from government services: low income individuals and families. This is why my South Florida Congressional colleagues and me, along with Sen. Nelson, are re-introducing this important legislation so that we can help diminish the pain many of the less fortunate in our state and across the nation will experience as a result of fewer social services. This bill has a simple goal and that is to give greater flexibility to cities in how they spend their CDBG funds in their public services accounts. I urge my colleagues to support our effort to assist those that need our help during these tough economic times.”*

*“The CDBG grant program is used by cities and counties to address local housing, community, and economic development issues. This legislation gives communities greater flexibility in helping meet their unique needs. By increasing the expenditure cap, public services such as food banks, child care, senior services, and crime prevention can continue to be provided to at-risk and vulnerable populations,”* Said Cong. Diaz-Balart.

*“During tough budget times this would enable local leaders to more specifically decide what’s best for their community,”* said U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson.

## **ROS-LEHTINEN AND SIRES INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF ALBA NATIONS & HOLD VIOLATORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABLE**

This week, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee and Congressman Albio Sires (NJ), Ranking Member of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, introduced bipartisan legislation, HR 1687 - Countering ALBA Act of 2013. ALBA refers to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America which includes Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela.. The Countering ALBA Act is a bill that:

1. Directs the United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States at the OAS to defend, protect, and strengthen the independent Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to advance the protection of human rights throughout the Western Hemisphere.
2. Urges the President to sanction persons who are officials of ALBA Governments or persons acting on behalf of ALBA Governments, who the President determines are responsible for or complicit in the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of ALBA countries. Such sanctions may include: ineligibility for a visa to enter the United States, blocking of property, and

prohibition on financial transactions pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

3. Calls on the President to transmit to Congress a report on persons that are engaged in censorship or other activities with respect to ALBA countries that prohibit, limit, or penalize the exercise of freedom of expression or assembly by citizens of ALBA countries; or limit access to print or broadcast media.
4. Directs the Secretary of State to transmit a comprehensive strategy to ensure that ALBA governments are democratic governments that are committed to making constitutional changes that would ensure regular free and fair elections and the full enjoyment of basic civil liberties and human rights by the citizens of ALBA countries; and have made demonstrable progress in establishing independent judiciaries and electoral councils.

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen said on the introduction of the bill,

*"I thank my colleague Congressman Albio Sires for joining me on introducing the Countering ALBA Act. Last month, ALBA leaders failed in their attempt to weaken the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights at the Organization of American States and the latest human rights report from the Department of State illustrates that the regimes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia continue to oppress their people and violate human rights. This important bipartisan bill will hold the oppressors accountable by sanctioning those persons who are responsible for or complicit in serious human rights violations and directs the President to defend and protect the independent Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The elections in Venezuela and Nicaragua reminds us that democratic principles continue to be under threat in the Hemisphere. The bill also calls for the Secretary of State to create a comprehensive strategy to ensure that free and fair elections are held and reforms are made to establish real independent judiciaries and electoral councils."*

Sires said on the introduction of the bill:

*"I join my colleague, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, in advocating accountability against persons responsible for human rights violations and calling for strengthening the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. This Act will help advance the principle that democracy, rule of law, and freedoms of expression should be freely exercised by all peoples in the hemisphere."*

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*The week of April 29 – May 3:*

- The House will not be in session this week.
- The Senate will not be in session this week.

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## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT APRIL 29 – MAY 3, 2013**

**Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Miami-Dade County Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:**

*THE SENATE WAS NOT IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS NOT IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **MIAMI-DADE TRANSIT RECEIVES \$10 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT FROM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart's offices notified OIA last Thursday that the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded Miami-Dade Transit a \$10 million grant. The grant, distributed by the Federal Transit Administration, is from the FY 2012 State of Good Repair Project and was selected on a competitive basis. The funds provided by this grant will be used to replace approximately 26 older traditional diesel buses that have reached their useful service life expectancy. The funding will be used exclusively to purchase new 40-foot diesel-electric hybrid buses.

### **PRESIDENT OBAMA MAKES CABINET NOMINATIONS**

Last week President Obama made three nominations to his cabinet – for the Departments of Transportation and Commerce as well as the U.S. Trade Representative. Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx will replace Ray LaHood as Secretary of Transportation. Sec. LaHood, a former GOP Congressman from Illinois, was called possibly the greatest transportation secretary in history by the President (and the Sec. has certainly been an ally of the County). Mayor Foxx was joined in the headlines this week by two other nominees, Penny Pritzker as commerce secretary and Michael Froman as the U.S. trade representative.

Pritzker is a longtime fundraiser and hotel magnate and is the chief executive of PSP Capital Partners and its affiliate, Pritzker Realty Group. She was also national finance chairman of then-Senator Obama's 2008 campaign for President, and was co-chairman of his 2012 reelection campaign.

Froman is the deputy national security adviser for international economics and previously worked at the investment bank Citigroup.

### **SEN. NELSON INTRODUCES LEGISLATION AIMED AT HOLDING OIL COMPANIES RESPONSIBLE FOR POLLUTION**

Senators Menendez and Nelson introduced the Big Oil Bailout Prevention Trust Fund Act of 2013 recently. Senator Nelson has charged that while regulators and the oil

industry have made some changes to boost the safety of offshore drilling since the nation's worst oil spill three years ago, federal lawmakers have yet to adopt a key bill needed to hold the oil companies fully and financially accountable in the event of another big spill.

The Senator is the lead co-sponsor of legislation that seeks to make the party responsible for an offshore oil spill liable for all discharge removal costs plus damages for each incident. Under current law, an oil company's liability is limited to removal costs plus only \$75 million – a figure that pales to the estimated \$20 billion to \$40 billion price tag of the 2010 BP spill.

*"In a nutshell, the current cap on liability means whatever an oil company doesn't pay, it's possible that innocent individuals and businesses could go uncompensated,"* Nelson said.

Nelson's comments come on the heels of a new report that blasts Congress for not doing enough to prevent a repeat of the BP disaster. Members of a former presidential commission tasked with investigating the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico have formed a new group that stated in their report that Congress has done little in the way of reforms since the BP disaster.

## **REP. ROS-LEHTINEN RELEASES STATEMENT ON OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S EXPORT CONTROL REFORMS**

Last Friday, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and members of the Miami-Dade Congressional delegation weighed in on the Obama Administration's recent efforts to roll out a series of regulations that would represent the largest overhaul of federal export controls in U.S. history. Some of the proposed overhauls by the Administration could require congressional approval before being fully implemented, and the Congresswoman and some of her House colleagues have indicated that they have reservations about the Administration's plan.

*"We can all agree that generic items like bolts, nuts and wires ... should not be regulated in the same manner as truly sensitive defense articles,"* Rep. Ros-Lehtinen said in a statement released late last week. *"This is not the path that the administration has chosen. Instead it has opted to act unilaterally in forming export controls, and the scope of its agenda is so sweeping and so complex in its implementation that it raises several concerns."*

The Congresswoman and her colleagues sent a letter in which they raised concerns that the Administration's proposals are "too lax." Specifically, whether license exemptions in the Administration's plan (which are meant to ease exports to friendly nations) might allow rogue regimes in Iran and North Korea to obtain parts for helicopters, fighter jets or tanks.

## **CUBA REMAINS ON STATE SPONSOR OF TERROR LIST FOLLOWING BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL LETTER**

On Monday, Congressional Members Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Albio Sires explained in a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry the reasons why Cuba should remain on the State Sponsors of Terrorism. Below is the letter they sent to Secretary Kerry.

*Dear Secretary Kerry:*

*As Cuban-American Members of Congress, we write to express the critical importance of continuing to list the Cuban dictatorship as a state sponsor of terrorism pursuant to section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act.*

*As you know, the Castro regime maintains close ties with Iran and Syria, two other U.S.-designated state sponsors of terrorism. Cuba and Iran have signed numerous cooperative and trade agreements, and have worked together to jam American and other outside information from piercing the information blockades imposed on their oppressed peoples. Cuba and Syria continue to increase their economic ties, shared hatred towards the United States and our ally Israel, and the Castro regime supports the Assad regime as it continues to murder tens of thousands.*

*The regime in Cuba has also been directly responsible for terrorist acts, such as the 1996 shoot-down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes over international waters and the resulting murder of three innocent Americans and one U.S. resident. There remain three outstanding indictments against the Cuban Air Force pilots, Lorenzo Alberto Pérez-Pérez and Francisco Pérez-Pérez, and the head of the Cuban Air Force, General Rubén Martínez Puente, for that act egregious act of international terrorism. We would urge you to indict Fidel and Raul Castro for ordering these brutal attacks against American civilians.*

*The Castro regime also maintains an active espionage network against the United States. Convicted Cuban spies include Ana Belen Montes, the five "WASP" spies, and Gwendolyn and Walter Meyers. In addition, most recently, it has come to our attention that a former U.S. Agency for International Development employee named Marta Rita Velazquez was indicted with conspiracy to commit espionage because she helped recruit Ana Belen Montes to spy on behalf of the Cuban regime.*

*The Cuban dictatorship maintains close links to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, which held hostage American citizens and continues terrorist acts against the strong U.S. ally Colombia. The Castro regime continues to provide safe harbor and assistance to members of the FARC, and provides a refuge for terrorist members*

*of the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), also a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.*

*Furthermore, the Cuban regime continues to provide safe harbor to more than seventy fugitives who fled U.S. justice including:*

- Joanne Chesimard, who murdered New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster during a routine traffic stop and was convicted of first degree murder, assault and battery of a police officer, assault with a dangerous weapon, assault with intent to kill, illegal possession of a weapon, and armed robbery, and remains one of the Top Ten “Featured Fugitives” on the FBI’s Domestic Terrorism List;*
- Victor Manuel Gerena, on the FBI’s list of the ‘Ten Most Wanted’ fugitives for carrying out a brutal \$7 million robbery of a Wells Fargo armored car in Connecticut.*

*It is unconscionable that these violent fugitives escaped U.S. justice only to be welcomed by their Cuban hosts. It underscores that any enemy of the United States is considered a friend to the Castro regime.*

*Finally, no assessment of the true nature of the Cuban dictatorship is complete without examining the regime’s brutal repression of pro-democracy activists and anyone else who attempts to pierce the regime’s information blockade. Numerous reports have indicated that repression in Cuba has escalated in recent months with brutal beatings targeted against the Ladies in White, independent journalists, religious leaders, artists, and many others. On March 12, 2013, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified before Congress that, “There is no indication that Castro’s efforts, including his stated interest in laying the groundwork for a generational transition in leadership, will loosen the regime’s grip on power.” Furthermore, the regime’s continued and unjustifiable imprisonment of U.S. humanitarian aid worker Alan Gross since December 2009 is another example of the regime’s moral depravity. Mr. Gross’ “crime” was attempting to connect Cuba’s small Jewish community to the internet. In Castro’s Cuba, the most innocuous acts are “crimes” which can result in long prison sentences in abhorrent conditions.*

*The regime in Cuba has not changed. In 2008, the Bush Administration mistakenly removed North Korea from the state sponsor of terrorism list. Now, the North Korean regime continues to increase tensions in the region putting the lives of our allies and of U.S. citizens in danger. The Cuban regime has deepened ties with other terrorist states and terrorist organizations, actively opposed U.S. interests, provided safe harbor to dangerous fugitives, escalated its brutal campaign of oppression against its own citizens, and refused to release U.S. citizen Alan Gross for more than three years. To award a unilateral*

*concession to the Castro dictatorship would encourage the regime to continue its reprehensible ways at the expense of the Cuban people and America's interests.*

*For these reasons, we firmly believe that the brutal Castro dictatorship should remain on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist states.*

The State Department subsequently recommended not to change Cuba status on the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST) list. Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen released the following statement:

*"The State Department's announcement yesterday that it intends to keep Cuba on the State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) list reaffirms that the Castro regime is, and has always been, a supporter and facilitator of terrorism. The unlawful actions against our nation include the Castro regime's order of the Brothers to the Rescue shutdown in 1996 which caused the deaths of U.S. citizens over international waters.*

*"The Cuban tyranny continues to undermine our interests at every turn and provides a safe haven for members of terrorist organizations like the FARC and ETA. The Castro brothers have long been collaborators with fellow SST members Iran and Syria, and Cuba acts as a sanctuary for fugitives from our country, including Joanne Chesimard wanted for the murder of a New Jersey State Trooper. Cuba also continues to operate its vast spy network within the United States, posing a direct threat to our national security.*

*"While I'm pleased that the State Department isn't taking Cuba off the SST list, I am disappointed it has not indicated a willingness to re-designate North Korea as an SST country. Removing North Korea from the SST list was a poor decision and it has not stopped the Pyongyang regime from undermining U.S. interests and from continuing its support to other SST members such as Iran and Syria. The illicit actions by the regimes in Cuba, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Sudan all warrant their inclusions on the SST list.*

## **REPS. ROS-LEHTINEN AND DIAZ-BALART HOST FAITH-BASED IMMIGRATION DISCUSSION**

Last Tuesday, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart hosted a faith-based immigration discussion with local leaders in Doral.

## **REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ STATEMENT ON JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH**

In honor of the eighth annual Jewish American Heritage Month this May, U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-23) released the following statement:

*"I am delighted to join President Obama and communities across the country in celebrating May as Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM), a time to celebrate the Jewish community's contributions to our nation's story and the great men and women who have come before us.*

*"This year's theme, Jews in Entertainment, allows us to reflect on the impact of Jewish Americans to the arts and sports, bringing our historic values to the gift of regaling others. For generations, Jewish entertainers have made us laugh and moved us to tears through their creative work. They've also taught us important life lessons and helped audiences ponder some of life's toughest issues – bigotry and tolerance, perseverance and determination, honesty and forgiveness.*

*"Famous Jews in entertainment include Irving Berlin, the patriotic songwriter and composer who penned "God Bless America," and so many other unforgettable tunes. In 1924, songwriter Jerome Kern observed, "Irving Berlin has no place in American music. He is American music."*

*"Stars and artists including George Gershwin, Harry Houdini, Barbra Streisand, and Nora Ephron have left an indelible mark on our country's entertainment history. From Leonard Bernstein's tale of love conquering prejudice in West Side Story, to Steven Spielberg's unforgettably moving Schindler's List, portraying one man's righteous quest to save Jews from certain death, Jewish storytellers have brought important values to the hearts and minds of American families throughout history.*

*"Though Jews comprise only about two percent of our nation's population, they have served as inspirational leaders and role models, from the Supreme Court to the silver screen. This May, as we celebrate these accomplishments, we continue to work together to dispel harmful stereotypes and promote tolerance and cultural understanding. Together, we can celebrate our shared history in the land Irving Berlin so proudly called 'home sweet home.'"*

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*The week of May 6 – May 10:*

- The House will be in session this week.
- The Senate will be in session this week.

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