

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT FEBRUARY 3 – FEBRUARY 7, 2014**

**(The following is an overview of D.C. activities concerning Miami-Dade County, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, the County's Congressional Delegation & the Administration)**

*THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION*

### **COUNTY CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION JOINS TEXAS REPS IN PUSHING FOR FAIR TREATMENT OF MIA & OTHER CBP STAFFING PILOT PROGRAM SITES**

House members whose districts were selected by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to participate in the newly created public-private-partnership CBP staffing programs (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport; City of El Paso, Texas; South Texas Assets Consortium; Houston Airports System; and Miami-Dade County) sent a joint letter to CBP Director Winkowski this week, urging fair consideration regarding the distribution of the additional 2,000 CBP Officers that were included in the 2014 omnibus spending bill.

The letter outlines the affected Members' expectations that an entities participation in this public-private partnership (PPP) would have zero bearing on the allocation of those additional officers. As stated in previous reports, while grateful for the opportunity to participate in this innovative PPP program, MIA and the County consider it a short-term solution that Congress provided to CBP to assist in addressing significant wait times at major international gateway ports of entry.

Letter is attached.

### **SENATE PASSES FLOOD INSURANCE BILL; SENATE BILL STALLS IN THE HOUSE**

Last week, the Senate passed Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, S.1926. Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio both voted in favor of the measure as it represents a fix to significant premium rate increases that Florida homeowners are up against.

On Tuesday, a procedural motion was voted on, which failed by a 193-225 margin, would have allowed the House to immediately take up and pass legislation to delay most rate hikes until the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducts an affordability study and updates its flood maps. An almost identical bill was passed by the Senate last week.

Congressman Joe Garcia, a staunch supporter of fixing the flood insurance rates, issued the following statement last week:

*"The Senate's strongly bipartisan passage of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act represents an important step forward in easing the onerous flood insurance premium rate increases facing our hardworking homeowners and small businesses. The House of Representatives should take up this issue immediately – it's simply too important to South Florida and communities throughout the country for the House not to take strong, decisive action."*

Congressman Garcia recently introduced the H.O.M.E. Act of 2014. The bill would place a five year delay on rate increases across the board, as well as create long-term solutions to the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) underlying issues by incentivizing mitigation measures.

Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz released the following statement on the failed vote:

*"As I have said before, Congress must act to keep flood insurance affordable. This bill allows for time to research the most affordable and efficient ways to reform the National Flood Insurance Program so that we can ensure stability for Florida homeowners,"* said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. *"Such steps would ease homeowners' concerns and prevent unnecessary shock to the housing market in Florida and nationwide. I urge Speaker Boehner to bring the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act to the House floor for full consideration without delay."*

Florida Gov. Rick Scott and members of the Florida Congressional Delegation praised the bipartisan action taken by the Senate and have urged House leadership to take swift action on the flood insurance rate fix. OIA and the Federal Contract Lobbyists will continue to monitor and report back on any developments regarding this legislation, in addition to working with the Florida Association of Counties and partner counties on this issue.

## **OIA TO PARTICIPATE IN FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES FLY-IN**

The Florida Association of Counties (FAC) will be in Washington next week for a series of meetings with the state's Congressional delegation and administration officials. OIA will participate in meetings with the Congressional delegation as well as with the White House, departments and agencies.

The topic of conversation will focus on the National Florida Insurance Program. On October 1 new rates will take effect based on a FEMA study on flood insurance affordability. These new rates will potentially have catastrophic financial implications for many homeowners in Florida and the Gulf States.

Legislation introduced by Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) seeks a four year delay on the new rates and is supported by the National Association of Homebuilders, National Association of Realtors, American Bankers Association and Independent Community Bankers.

The House has a narrower bill, H. R. 3693, that would delay rate hikes until March 1, 2015. Republicans are opposed to reversing the premium increases which fund the \$24 billion deficit in the National Flood Insurance Program. It is unclear when the House will take up their legislation.

## **SEN. NELSON SPEECH AT MIDDLE EAST RESEARCH INSTITUTE – REMARKS ON LEGACY OF TOM LANTOS & ANTI-SEMITISM**

Senator Nelson recently spoke at the Middle East Media Research Institute's (MEMRI) 5th annual Tom Lantos Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial Archives Commemoration on Capitol Hill. This MEMRI program, started in 2009, strives to be the world's foremost resource on the subject, serving legislators, policymakers, and researchers around the world. In his remarks, Senator Nelson said:

*"Today we remember the legendary Tom Lantos and reengage on an issue he spent his life trying to combat: anti-Semitism. Tom condemned acts of anti-Semitism wherever they occurred - from the former Soviet Union to the United Nations - using every tool he had. We lost Tom nearly 6 years ago. It was also a tremendous loss for human rights defenders around the world. And the causes Tom championed continue to challenge all of us to this day."*

## **SENS. RUBIO, WARREN INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT VETERANS FROM FINANCIAL SCAMS**

Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced bipartisan legislation this week that would help protect older veterans from financial scams. The bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to work with other federal agencies and states to crack down on scam artists who are diverting federal funds intended to support low-income older veterans. The legislation was previously introduced by Senators Rubio and Warren as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act.

*"Our veterans have courageously defended our country and protected our freedoms, and they deserve the utmost respect after their service," said Rubio. "That's why it is necessary to stop older veterans from being the target of scams and predatory practices. These heroes deserve better, and we will always appreciate their brave service and sacrifice."*

*"For thousands of our oldest veterans who need help with basic daily activities, the Aid and Attendance program is a critical lifeline," said Warren. "Unfortunately, scams are turning the program into something that can actually undermine the financial security of our older veterans and waste federal funds. This bipartisan*

*proposal will help put an end to these financial scams and ensure that we honor our veterans' commitment, sacrifice, and service to the nation."*

The VA offers an Aid & Attendance benefit (A&A) to help pay for assisted living or in-home personal care for veterans who qualify for a VA pension, and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person. Scam artists have targeted veterans, charging them fees for obtaining the benefit even though the application process is free. Even worse, they often take control of the veteran's assets and move them into an irrevocable trust or an annuity, which the elderly veteran often cannot access again for many years, creating significant financial strain. Moving assets this way may also disqualify the veteran for other assistance, like Medicaid.

## **CLIP: APPROPRIATORS FIND WAYS AROUND EARMARK BAN TO STEER DOLLARS TO FAVORED PROJECTS**

Earmarks may have been banned in Congress since 2010, but it's still good to be an appropriator. Although committee leaders no longer have the overt ability to direct money for specific projects back to their districts, the \$1.1 trillion omnibus (PL 113-76) Congress cleared last month demonstrates they still have other ways to protect priorities back home — or hamstring those they oppose — through their control of funding levels and policy riders.

Earmarking is "basically dead," but "the appropriations process manifests itself in many ways," said Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, the ranking Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

This certainly is not the earmarking power appropriators once wielded, but the ability to plus-up or draw down funding for preferred programs or include language directing or barring agencies from addressing particular issues still serves as currency for many lawmakers.

"Earmarks have always been a management tool, but they're not the only tool in the toolkit," said Jim Dyer, a former GOP staff director for the House Appropriations Committee now at the Podesta Group.

"The simple acts of funding, defunding or rearranging funding are themselves expressions of Congress' priorities," he said.

Sean Kennedy, director of research for Citizens Against Government Waste, said appropriators have found ways around the ban. "What we're seeing now is more action at the program level," he said. "We'll see a program that was heavily earmarked in the past getting significant plus-ups."

The fingerprints of top appropriators are evident throughout the omnibus guiding fiscal 2014 spending even if specific projects, the much-derided "pork," are not.

The nearly 1,600-page spending bill restores much of the funding for NASA that was slashed under sequestration last March and shields the space agency from the cuts passed by the House Appropriations Committee last year. The measure allocates \$17.6 billion for NASA, a \$781 million bump above its sequester-reduced level and roughly a 1 percent increase above the agency's fiscal 2013 enacted level. NASA has flight centers located in Maryland and Alabama, the home states of Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski and Shelby.

Top Republican appropriators, meanwhile, were successful in blocking any new funding for high-speed rail or for grants to states for the capital costs of improving intercity rail service.

Meanwhile, House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers, who hails from coal-heavy eastern Kentucky, boosted funding for the Department of Energy's fossil energy research and development program, which focuses heavily on developing advanced coal technologies, by more than 5 percent above the fiscal 2013 enacted level. He also folded in policy language that bars the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corp. from blocking coal and other power-generation projects.

Some observers said that even without the formal ability to earmark, lawmakers can find ways to bolster their specific priorities, including calling agencies directly.

The definition for what is considered an earmark is also not set in stone. A particular project is not considered an earmark if it is competitively selected out of a pool of applicants, according to Dyer, and lawmakers can find ways around that.

"There's nothing preventing appropriators from establishing pots of money, tailoring it a certain way and allowing organizations to openly compete for that money," he said.

Appropriators say their ability to shape program funding and policy riders is nothing new, but lawmakers differ on whether they could achieve many of their same goals with those tools as they could when earmarking was commonplace.

It's not quite the same as having the power to earmark, but "there's still an awful lot we can do," said Tom Cole, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the Legislative Branch spending bill. The Oklahoma Republican said he was able to accomplish his goal to protect Native American health by raising funding levels for relevant federal programs over the last several years.

"We still have the power of programmatic changes," which is significant, he said.

But other appropriators said that although tweaking program spending levels and report language can be useful, it cannot address many of the pressing local problems they were once able to fix with earmarks.

Appropriators can still “work with departments and agencies and things like that, but it’s not as clear cut,” said Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Tom Harkin, D-Iowa. “That’s the big stuff, but earmarks are how you take care of some specific problem that you might have in a state or district that needs some special attention that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to get.”

Many appropriators also expressed concern that not being able to earmark — and relying on programmatic-level but not individual project guidance — allows the administration to make many spending decisions instead of Congress.

“It’s not the same” as earmarking, said Rogers. “Agencies can be beefed up, but how they spend their money is their decision.”

Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., ranking member of the Senate Energy-Water Appropriations Subcommittee, said he still supports the earmark moratorium. But, Alexander said, he is troubled that “if a Tennessean comes in to see me about a dam that’s about to break, all I can do is give them President Obama’s telephone number.” *(Provided by the Greenberg Traurig Federal Lobbying Team)*

## **REPS. WEIGH IN ON WAPO REPORT THAT CUBAN-AMERICAN EXILE COMMUNITY LEADER & LONGTIME FUNDER IS CONSIDERING BUSINESS IN CUBA**

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, made the following statement on reports of Cuban-American sugar tycoon Alfonso Fanjul considering investing in Cuba. Statement by Ros-Lehtinen:

*"At a time when the democracy activists on the island are facing even harsher reprisals from the brutal Cuban regime, it's pathetic that a Cuban-American tycoon feels inspired to trample on the backs of those activists in order to give the communist thugs more money with which to repress. The only little old thing that is standing in Alf's way of realizing these sleazy business deals with the devil is US law. He doesn't talk about the arbitrary arrests of pro-freedom leaders in Cuba or the continual beatings endured by the peaceful Damas de Blanco. Oh no, for Alf, the only hindrance to turning a profit off the suffering of the Cuban people is pesky US laws and he is working with groups to undo those laws. It is sickening to read that he brings up the separation of the Cuban family when he is doing all he can to exacerbate that problem. Shame on him. And while Alf was massaging his future profit deals with Castro's Foreign Minister, there were over one thousand political arrests last month. A new record. What's it all about, Alf? It's about a people who yearn for freedom and not about a tycoon lining his pockets at their expense."*

Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart also released the following statement on the reports.

*"I am outraged by reports that a fellow Cuban-American, who has witnessed the atrocities inflicted by the Castro regime, has apparently chosen short-term profit over standing with the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom.*

*"Some might be blind to the Castro regime's brutality and ruthless oppression, but Alfonso Fanjul's betrayal is compounded because he knows better. He knows very well that any investments made with the Castro regime will not help the Ladies in White, Unión Patriótica de Cuba, the Orlando Zapata Tamayo National Civic Resistance and Civil Disobedience Front, or other pro-democracy groups, but rather, will go straight to the pockets of the Cuban people's jailers and continue to prop them up.*

*"Alfonso should cry less for his lost mansion, and more for the imprisoned artists and musicians, oppressed independent journalists, or for the women that are beaten every Sunday for simply wanting to celebrate mass."*

## **SEN. RUBIO TO PROPOSE IDEAS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM AT MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE ON MONDAY**

On Monday, February 10, Senator Marco Rubio will deliver a speech at Miami-Dade College proposing new ideas to make higher education more affordable and equip students and adults with the skills needed for 21st century jobs. The Senator will address the challenges of paying for college while outlining alternatives to the traditional college approach that could reduce student loan burdens and help students pursue higher education in new ways. The speech will be followed by an on-stage interview conducted by National Journal's Ronald Brownstein and Fusion Network's Mariana Atencio.

The following event is sponsored by National Journal. RSVP to the event, or watch it streaming live via the National Journal's website.

Monday, February 10, 2014  
Senator Rubio To Propose Ideas For Higher Education Reform  
12:30 P.M. EST  
Miami-Dade College  
Wolfson Campus Chapman Conference Center  
300 NE 2nd Avenue  
Miami, FL 33132

## **REPS. WILSON & CONYERS HOST "EMPLOYMENT: A HUMAN RIGHT" FORUM**

Following the establishment of the Congressional Full Employment Caucus last week, Congresswoman Frederica Wilson and Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (MI-13) hosted a forum entitled, "Employment: A Human Right," moderated by Christina Bellantoni, Editor-in-Chief of Roll Call, on Wednesday. Esteemed panellists for this

forum included: Dean Baker the Co-Director and Co-founder of the Center for Economic and Policy Research; John Cavanagh, Director of the Institute for Policy Studies; Phil Harvey, Professor of Law and Economics at Rutgers University; Thea Lee, Deputy Chief of Staff of the AFL-CIO; and Larry Mishel, President of the Economic Policy Institute.

In 2013, 25 percent of the US population was unemployed or underemployed and not earning enough to support basic needs. As employment is the best way to boost Americans' purchasing power, the right to employment should be seen as the critical foundation of our economic and political system. If society cannot assure the survival of all citizens through access to employment, government has an important role to play in seeking to create the conditions to enable full employment. The panel discussed the unemployment crisis as well as Congresswoman Wilson's H.R. 2821, the American Jobs Act of 2013 and Congressman Conyers's legislation, H.R. 1000, the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act.

## **REP. WILSON STATEMENT ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson released the following statement today in recognition of Black History Month:

*"Each February, we recognize and honor the accomplishments of the African-American Community and celebrate its rich history. We reflect on the long road to freedom and equality, and recommitted ourselves to the fight against injustice.*

*This year we will also mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – landmark anti-discrimination and equal rights legislation. But one of our most fundamental rights as Americans—the right to vote—is being threatened as a result of a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act being struck down last year by the Supreme Court. I call on Congress to repair, strengthen and broaden the protections of the Voting Rights Act.*

*And, as we celebrate Black History Month, let us continue to work together to fight injustice and inequality everywhere and create economic opportunities for everyone."*

## **REP. DIAZ-BALART TO BE HONORED BY AUDUBON FLORIDA**

On Friday, Audubon Florida will honor Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart as the 2013 Champion of the Everglades. Congressman Diaz-Balart will be present to receive the award and offer remarks.

*"Audubon proudly honors Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart with our Champion of the Everglades award," said Eric Draper, Audubon Florida's Executive Director. "Congressman Diaz-Balart has shown strong leadership leading to real results for America's River of Grass, demonstrating that progress is the result of*



*patience, hard work, and partnership. His leadership in the Florida Congressional delegation has kept the Everglades on the top of the nation's ecosystem priority list, year after year. Congressman Diaz-Balart knows the true value of Everglades restoration projects realized for both Florida's economy and the environment."*

Congressman Diaz-Balart is an ardent supporter of the Greater Everglades and a cofounder of the Everglades Caucus in the US House of Representatives. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, the congressman has lead efforts to ensure funding for the construction of important Everglades restoration projects, including the recently completed C-111 Spreader Canal Western Project and the first phase of the Tamiami Trail bridge.

## **REP. WILSON ANNOUNCES THE CONGRESSIONAL SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATH (STEM) ACADEMIC COMPETITION**

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson announced this week, the first Congressional Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Academic Competition. Established by Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, this new competition is designed to engage student's creativity and encourage their participation in STEM education fields. For 2014, the nationwide competition will be an App Challenge.

This competition is open to all high school students who live or attend school in Florida's 24th Congressional District. Students will compete by creating and exhibiting their software application, or "app," for mobile, tablet, or computer devices on a platform of their choice.

To enter, students must first register at [www.wilson.house.gov/stem-competition](http://www.wilson.house.gov/stem-competition) and create an account at [www.challengepost.com](http://www.challengepost.com). Entries must be submitted to ChallengePost online before 11:59 PM EST on April 30th, 2014.

In addition, participants must also be available to attend and compete in the Showcase event on Wednesday, May 14th, 2014 at Miami-Dade College North Campus, 11380 NW 27th Ave, Miami, FL 33167, Conference Center 3249, from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM.

The winning student's app in each participating congressional district will be featured on Congresswoman Wilson's U.S. House of Representatives website, <http://studentappchallenge.house.gov> and <http://Challenge.gov>.

## **REP. WILSON ANNOUNCES OPENING OF ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION FOR DISTRICT 24**

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson also announced the opening of the annual Congressional Art Competition for District 24.

Each spring, the Congressional Institute sponsors a nationwide high school visual art competition to recognize and encourage artistic talent from Congressional districts across the country. More than 650,000 U.S. high school students have participated in this competition since its inception in 1982.

This competition is open to all high school students who live or attend school in Florida's 24th Congressional District. All art work and forms must be mailed or delivered to Congresswoman Wilson's Miami Gardens' district office before 5:00 p.m., Monday, April 16, 2014. The office is located at 18425 NW 2nd Avenue, Suite 355, Miami Gardens, FL 33169.

The winning piece will be hung in the Cannon Tunnel, an underground passageway that connects the United States Capitol to the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C. Thousands of people – including Members of Congress, staff and tourists – pass by the exhibit daily.

In addition, the winner is eligible for scholarship money to a leading art school, and will receive complimentary airline tickets, to attend the installation of their artwork at a reception for all the winners across the country at the Capitol.

The name of the winner from District 24 will be announced at Congresswoman Wilson's annual Congressional Art Show and Awards Ceremony Thursday, April 24, 2014, at 5:30p.m., at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County.

## **REP. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ JOINS 'CHARACTERS UNITED' CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT HATE & DISCRIMINATION**

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz announced this week that that she is partnering with USA Network in its efforts to promote Characters Unite Month this February, continuing the Network's award-winning, five-year public service campaign to combat hate and discrimination.

Along with other Members of Congress, Rep. Wasserman Schultz appears in an "I Won't Stand For..." PSA video that aims to promote tolerance and acceptance by uniting participants and viewers against social injustice. The larger PSA campaign will also feature appearances by notable actors, athletes and musicians.

*"I think we can combat bullying by making sure that adults who can get involved, don't allow bullying to continue when they're aware of it," says Rep. Wasserman Schultz in the video, where she also shares her own experience of being bullied as a child. "Characters Unite is all about applying the Golden Rule, which holds true all the way through your life, which makes sure we look out for one another."*

Toby Graff, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, USA Network, states:

*"This Characters Unite Month, and throughout the entire year, we are honored to use the power of media, across multiple platforms, to continue to shine a brighter spotlight on injustice and inequality and to inspire more people to become a force for positive change. We're especially grateful to all of the amazing talent who has joined the Characters Unite movement."*

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*February 10 – February 14, 2014:*

- The House will be in session
- The Senate will be in session

### **Transportation Infrastructure Investments**

#### **Senate Environment and Public Works Committee – Full Committee Hearing**

Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairwoman Boxer, CA) will hold a hearing titled "MAP-21 Reauthorization: The Economic Importance of Maintaining Federal Investments in our Transportation Infrastructure."

Date: Wednesday, Feb. 12, 10 a.m.

Place: 406 Dirksen Bldg.

#### Witnesses Scheduled:

*Thomas Donohue, **CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce***

*Richard Trumka, **president, AFL-CIO***

*Mike Hancock, **president, AASHTO; Secretary, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet***

*T. Peter Ruane, **CEO, American Road and Transportation Builders Association***

*Jay Timmons, **CEO, National Association of Manufacturers***

*(Provided by the Greenberg Traurig Federal Lobbying Team)*

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