



Board of County Commissioners

**Ken Keech**

**Commissioner - District 4**

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## May 2007 Newsletter

### **“Tallahassee Update”**

**By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keech**

As many of you may know, the 2007 legislative session is underway in Tallahassee. As I write this article, the Florida House and Senate are more than halfway through their 2007 regular session. Many important bills that have the potential to affect our lives in Broward are being considered.

As is customary, each of the nine Broward County Commissioners was asked to travel to Tallahassee for a week to meet with various Florida Senators and Representatives. Our purpose is to advocate for those bills that would benefit Broward. Just as importantly, each Broward County Commissioner is also asked to advocate against those bills which would adversely affect our quality of life.

When asked by the Mayor whether I would travel to Tallahassee to “do my part”, I said “yes”, but only during a week when the Broward County Commission was not in session. I strongly believe that my first priority is to be sitting up on the dais when the Broward County Commission is in session, utilizing my vote to protect the interests of District 4. The Mayor agreed to my scheduling request and I visited our Broward-based elected officials in Tallahassee during the week of April 9<sup>th</sup>. While there I had the opportunity to meet privately with Senators Atwater, Rich, and Ring and Representatives Skidmore, Bogdanoff, Seiler, Porth, Kiar, Jenne, and Gibbons.

I voiced three major concerns with each of them. You can probably guess by now what they were: property tax reform, over-development, and environmental protection.

I reminded these elected officials that the property tax crisis affects every resident of District 4, regardless of political affiliation. I advised them of the promise I made to you during my campaign—that I would never vote to raise your property taxes. I reiterated to them that I strongly support property tax reform that limits the ability of counties and cities to raise your property taxes year, after year, after year. Nevertheless, I urged caution during this process. My message was simple. Every elected official-on a state, county or municipal level- must vote to decrease property taxes. Now. We must not, however, unintentionally eviscerate county and municipal governments in the process. I left Tallahassee with the belief that all of our Broward-based elected officials, republican and democrat, agreed.

I also asked each of these elected officials to oppose an awful bill that would eliminate the County's ability to supervise many land use decisions of municipalities. As I have written before, we are fortunate that our County Charter grants this additional protection to Broward's residents. Clearly, this power should be used sparingly. City Commissioners should be trusted to make land use decisions that are in the best interests of their residents. But, in reality, that doesn't always happen. Whether it's a landowner's attempt to build McMansions on our dwindling number of golf courses, or a speculator's attempt to increase density on our already overdeveloped barrier island, your County Commission (and specifically your County Commissioner) must retain the ability to just say "no" when city commissions lack the will to do so. I am extremely pleased to tell you that every elected official I met, republican or democrat, agreed to oppose this bill.

Lastly, I asked each of these elected officials to oppose an equally offensive House bill that would basically eliminate the ability of Broward County to protect Florida's critical wetlands. I reminded them that Broward, Palm Beach and other counties are the last line of defense for the protection of wetlands, and the only line of defense for wetlands under ½ an acre. I stressed the fact that this bill undermines the traditional approach to environmental protection in Florida, which is that local governments serve as the last line of protection, filling in the gaps where state and federal requirements do not adequately address the needs of the community. Again, I received a positive reception from the vast majority of the elected officials. I am cautiously optimistic that this bill will not become law.

I'm now back home in District 4 and looking out for your interests. As usual, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I work for you.

Until next month.....

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