



“Broward County’s Challenges”

By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl

When you first elected me to be your County Commissioner in November 2006, I told you that Broward County faced numerous challenges. For too long, the Broward County Commission had been out of touch with the needs of its residents. I agreed to be your voice on the County Commission advocating for lower property taxes; fiscal accountability; more open and green spaces; and yearly reserve funding for beach restoration. I pledged to be an environmentally sensitive, business friendly County Commissioner.

As I have written in my previous newsletters, we have made substantial progress in the last 18 months. (For earlier articles, go to <http://www.broward.org/kenkeechl/newsletters.htm>.) Nevertheless, many challenges still face Broward County. I will briefly discuss three challenges.

First and foremost, the Broward County Commission must continue to cut spending and lower property taxes. The residents of Broward County are hurting. Quite simply, many are finding it difficult to afford to live in Broward County, and an increasing number are finding it difficult to make their monthly mortgage payments. While the Commission doesn’t have jurisdiction to address the property insurance crisis, we do have the ability to lower the County’s portion of your property tax bill. I will continue to advocate a) for lower property taxes; b) against wasteful spending practices; and c) to streamline and/or eliminate unnecessary Departments, Divisions and Sections within Broward County’s bloated government.

Second, the Broward County Commission must continue to attract (and retain) businesses in Broward County. While we undoubtedly need to expand the types of businesses in Broward, it is without question that tourism and the marine industry are currently our two most important business segments. For the last two years, I have been the Broward County Commission’s appointee to the Broward Alliance, Broward’s public/private business partnership. In this position, I have worked closely with Broward’s leading CEOs so I have firsthand knowledge of the

numerous issues facing the business community. I am convinced that the Broward County Commission has made three important decisions which must be finalized. We voted to expand the southern runway at the Hollywood/Ft. Lauderdale International Airport. We voted to expand (in an environmentally sensitive manner) Port Everglades. We voted to construct an onsite convention center hotel in Fort Lauderdale. These three decisions alone will ensure that Broward does not lose its competitive edge.

Third, we must address our impending wastewater and drinking water crisis. This issue encompasses quality, as well as quantity. Quite simply, we continue to pollute our oceans with our wastewater, and we continue to consume drinking water at an alarming rate. Fortunately, the County Commission is now taking steps to substantially reduce its release of wastewater into our ocean. Moreover, as your County Commissioner I have learned that we don't have a lack of drinking water. We have a lack of cheap drinking water. Notwithstanding the current property downturn, increased residential and commercial development in Broward is inevitable. The County Commission must continue to proactively plan for and invest in alternative water supply sources such as reverse osmosis, desalination, water reuse, as well as other options.

Again, these are just three of the issues facing Broward County today. I look forward to addressing each of these issues as your County Commissioner.

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