



“Broward’s Tough Economic Times”

By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl

It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone reading this article that our local, state, and national economies are suffering. Banks are collapsing, the stock market is plummeting, unemployment is rising, and home values are decreasing. At every event I attend, your neighbors are telling me that they are worried—very worried. I get it. It's a scary time to be raising a family or running a business. And guess what? It's a scary time to be one of nine Commissioners in charge of a County government as large as Broward County.

But it's an exciting time as well. And the solution to our temporary economic problems isn't difficult. Quite simply, as a governmental entity, Broward County must learn to do more with less. And this is imperative because we know from experience that when the economy suffers, the need for county services increases.

By a 7-2 vote, we have just approved Broward County's FY 09 budget. And for the second year in a row, I have kept my campaign promise to never raise your property taxes. Similar to last year's budget, the Broward County Commission has cut its FY 09 budget by approximately \$87,000,000.00. Before you elected me in November of 2006 to be your County Commissioner, it was common for the Broward County Commission to increase its budget year after year after year. Well, those days are over and property tax relief--at least at the County level-- is finally becoming a reality.

How were we able to do this, especially in these tough economic times? By being fiscally prudent and rejecting historical spendthrift budgets. For the second year in a row, we have continued to consolidate our vast organizational structure (and eliminate unnecessary jobs); we have deferred capital programs where appropriate; and, as a last resort, we have minimally cut back library and park hours during times of limited utilization. Whenever we reduced or eliminated a program, we assessed the impact and worked diligently to minimize that impact if possible. We started funding “needs” and not “wants”--just like we all do at home every day when balancing our families' budgets.

In closing, I want to tell you that after having served as your Broward County Commissioner for almost 2 years, I am optimistic about Broward's economic future. One thing is for certain: this isn't a time for politics. It's a time for leadership. And this year's FY09 budget is a step in the right direction.

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