



**A Message From
Lois Wexler
Broward County Commissioner
District 5**

There is a lot at stake this year as the Broward County Commission begins work on the fiscal year 2010 budget. The first budget workshop was held in February and the Commission was told that we face a budget gap of up to \$165-million dollars. Considering that we've cut nearly \$200-million in the past two years, filling that large of a gap will have a tremendous impact on county services, programs and jobs.

The Commission will consider and deliberate a number of strategies between now and September when the final budget will be approved. We work closely with Broward County's Constitutional Offices (including the Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections and Property Appraiser) to seek their collaboration. Their cooperation is critical because more than half of the County Commission's tax supported budget (51 percent) is spent to fund these operations.

As we move through the process, there are many, many things that will have to be taken into consideration, not the least of which might be some type of adjustment to the millage rate. Many cities (6 out of 8 in District 5) raised their millage rate last year. However, the county portion of your property tax bill hasn't increased in more than a decade. In fact, the County Commission has reduced the millage rate on property taxes 25% (excluding voter approved bond debt) in the last five years. In 2008, the millage rate was reduced 13.3%, the largest decrease in nearly a quarter of a century.

That being said, as your County Commissioner I must find a balance between the taxes collected and the services we are able to provide. As a County, and as individuals, we must live within our means. But, there is a level of service that people have come to expect and count on. As an example, closing our County Parks one day a week last year prompted numerous angry emails. This is just one minor example of a service that was cut to help us live within our means. As the economic forecast turns more and more dismal, more and more constituents are looking to the County for assistance. Our Family Success Centers have never been busier and each day brings new cases of unemployed, soon-to-be homeless people to our door. I have an obligation to all of our County's residents to find that balance.

To better explain the budget process and various detailed elements of the County's budget, I will be posting budget information to my webpage at www.broward.org/wexler. We will soon have the 2010 Budget icon available. I'll be updating the information from time to time and encourage you to fill out the contact information that is requested. Include your thoughts or comments as I appreciate hearing from you.

You are, of course, welcome to follow our budget deliberations and you can do that in a number of ways. All of our meetings are open to the public so you are certainly welcome to attend the meetings/workshops at the Governmental Center. This year you can also view our budget workshops on the internet and on television.

The budget workshops are webcast on Broward's Video Central, which can be found at <http://www.broward.org/video/>.

The details of the televised schedule can be found at <http://www.broward.org/televisedmeetings.htm>.

Dates and times of all our meetings are available at http://www.broward.org/commission/com_meetings.htm.

You might want to mark your calendars for our Public Hearings. They are scheduled for September 10 and September 22 at 5:01 p.m. at the Broward County Governmental Center. I encourage you to attend and voice your opinions to the entire Board of County Commissioners. If you have any issues or concerns that you'd like to discuss please feel free to call my office at (954) 357-7005 or email me at lwexler@broward.org

Sincerely,
Lois Wexler
Broward County Commissioner-District 5