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National Association of Counties Annual Conference

Alleghany County, Pennsylvania hosted the National Association of Counties' (NACo) 77th Annual Conference and Exposition. The Annual Conference provides county officials with a great opportunity to vote on NACo's policies related to federal legislation and regulation and to elect new officers. Chris Rogers of Douglas County, Nebraska, Linda Langston of Linn County, Iowa and Riki Hokama of Maui County, Hawaii were elected President, First Vice President and Second Vice President, respectively.

Votes were cast on a broad array of issues affecting counties. Of interest to Broward County, a resolution calling for the rejection of the United Nation's Agenda 21, which is a non-binding and voluntary sustainable development action plan, was soundly defeated. An effort to include support for the Railroad Competition Act as a part of the official NACo Transportation Steering Committee platform was also rejected. The controversial legislation, which was not filed in the 112th Congress, would impose previously-failed federal regulations and controls on railroads and undercut their ability to invest in the rail system. A vibrant freight rail industry able to reinvest in track and equipment is viewed as key to economic growth and job creation. Reinstating extensive federal regulation on the rail industry would increase freight movement costs and put Broward County at a competitive disadvantage. While, adoption as a platform position was rejected, support for the Railroad Competition Act, in the form of a resolution was renewed; however, an agreement was reached by the Transportation Steering Committee to revisit the issue during the NACo's Legislative Conference in March 2013.

US Senator Bill Nelson Introduces AIDS 2012 Conference Resolution

Sen. Nelson introduced on July 23, 2012, a bi-partisan resolution in the United States Senate to commemorate the 2012 International AIDS Conference. Sen. Rubio joined in cosponsoring the resolution. This week, over 20,000 official registrants and an estimated 30,000 activists and stakeholders are in Washington for the 2012 International AIDS Conference. This marks the first time since 1990 that the conference has been held in the United States. The conference theme "Turning the Tide" seeks to take advantage of scientific and medical gains in the battle against HIV

and AIDS. While the scientific community is largely sponsoring the gathering, the Global Village is the hub of activity for practitioners, community development organizations, faith-based groups, and people living with HIV.

FARM BILL

On June 21, the U.S. Senate passed the *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012* (S. 3240), also known as "the Farm Bill," by a vote of 64-35. Similar legislation in the House of Representatives passed the House Committee on Agriculture on July 12. A large bi-partisan group of representatives and industry stakeholders have urged House leadership to bring the bill to a floor vote. Every five years, Congress is tasked with passing comprehensive legislation that sets national agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry policy. The last Farm Bill passed in 2008, and expires in 2012.

The Senate Farm Bill includes some of the most significant reforms in agricultural policy in decades. The reforms include cuts of over \$23 billion dollars in spending by eliminating unnecessary direct payment subsidies, consolidating programs to end duplication, and cracking down on food assistance abuse. Most efforts to implement major cuts to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) were defeated; however, the Senate bill contains a \$4 billion cut to nutritional programs. If agreement is reached on a final bill it is expected to contain at least this level of cut to SNAP.

The bill will also expand export opportunities to help farmers sell in new markets. The comprehensive legislation will provide training and access to capital to help beginning farmers to get off the ground while creating initiatives to assist American veterans in starting agriculture businesses. These reforms are designed to strengthen agriculture initiatives that are helping farmers and agriculture businesses grow the economy.

At the moment, the future of the Farm Bill is unknown. House Speaker John Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor apparently do not want to give a contentious bill floor time during an election season. A one-year extension of current law is among the possible options.

FTA Awards \$787 Million in Grants

On July 26th, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood announced \$787 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant awards that will fund bus and bus facility projects throughout the country. A total of 255 projects in 48 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico received funding. Broward received a \$401,440 Bus Livability grant. The County will use the grant to construct 13 bus shelters outfitted with solar panels for lighting at night. These shelters will be installed in the City of Tamarac, which has transit service provided by Broward County Transit.

House Votes to Open Oil Drilling Off East Coast

On July 24, the House of Representatives voted to eliminate the President's five-year plan for offshore drilling, supplanting it with a plan calling for more aggressive oil and gas development in the Atlantic Ocean, Alaska, southern California and Gulf areas. The House bill (H.R. 1231) would provide for 29 lease sales over the five-year period for energy production. The Administration's five-year plan allows for 12

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leases in the Gulf of Mexico and three off the coast of Alaska. The White House maintains that the current plan already provides access to 75 percent of energy resources available to the United States. The Republican House argued that expansion would create much needed jobs and would generate approximately \$600 million in revenues. The proposal passed 253-170 with 25 Democrats voting in support. The bill is unlikely to pass the Democratic Senate and the White House has already issued a veto threat.

Numeric Nutrient Criteria Update

On June 7, a Florida Administrative Law Judge upheld the Florida DEP-developed numeric nutrient criteria standards as being sufficiently protective of Florida's surface waters. Immediately following this ruling, DEP certified its standards, which were first submitted to the U.S. EPA for action in February of this year, as complete to the EPA. At this time, the EPA has until has an August 13 deadline to approve and give effect to the DEP's standards and in turn vacate its own criteria; conversely, EPA has until September 11 to formally disapprove the DEP rules.

Notably for Broward County and other South Florida counties, the deadline for EPA to propose additional numeric nutrient criteria for South Florida canals has been extended to November 30. The DEP-developed rules do not include numeric criteria for such canals, as the state continues to apply narrative standards for these waterbodies.

House Passes Bill to Stop Regulations and Rules Costing \$50 Million

On July 26, 2012, the House of Representatives passed the Regulatory Freeze for Jobs Act of 2012 (H.R. 4078). The bill would stop all pending federal regulations with annual costs of \$50 million or more. With a 245-172 vote, the bill would also prevent any president from issuing "midnight" regulations in the waning months of their administrations. It further targets and weakens "sue and settle" tactics commonly used by environmental groups to strengthen environmental rules through the courts or to pressure agencies to expedite implementing delayed regulations.

The bill is widely considered dead on arrival in the Democratic Senate while the Administration has also issued a presidential veto threat.

Meetings Held to Advance Port Everglades Deepening & Widening Feasibility Study

On July 20, 2012, the Administration announced its "We Can't Wait" initiative which identified seven of 43 infrastructure projects that will be expedited by federal agencies. While the Administration did not make available the full list of projects, among the first seven projects to be expedited were the federal reviews to permit the deepening and widening of the Port of Miami, and expediting the feasibility study to deepen the Port of Jacksonville to 50 feet. Unfortunately, the Administration's announcement did not include expediting the completion of the feasibility study to deepen and widen Port Everglades, which has been ongoing for over 15 years and was begun prior to the Jacksonville Port study.

In response to this omission, and with the assistance of The Ferguson Group (TFG)

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and Steinberg and Associates (Steinberg), a meeting was scheduled with senior officials of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on July 23. Port Director Steve Cernak and OIAPS staff attended the meeting along with TFG and Steinberg. Significantly, Congressman Debbie Wasserman Schulz sent her Legislative Director, Coby Dolan, to participate in the meeting. The aim of the meeting was to obtain the Corps' solid commitment to a revised study schedule that would ensure a Chief of Engineers (COE) Report by the end of this calendar year or the first quarter of 2013 at the latest. The COE report is needed to federally authorize Port Everglades' deepening and widening project in the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Generally, Congress considers WRDA legislation every six to seven years.

Port Everglades received assurances that a meeting would occur during the first week of August between Corps Headquarters and Jacksonville District staff to reach agreement on a new schedule to achieve a 2013 COE Report, and by the end of August a meeting or conference call would be held with the Port to discuss the new schedule. Moreover, Corps headquarter officials committed to monitor more closely the study's completion.

In addition to meeting with Corps officials, meetings were held with members of Broward County's Congressional Delegation. Meetings were held with Congressman Allen West, Congressman Ted Deutch, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Senator Bill Nelson, and staff from Congressman Hastings' Office. The delegation was very supportive of the Port Everglades' position regarding the completion of the feasibility study and offered significant assistance ranging from a signing a delegation letter to the Corps, calling upon the White House, and arranging a meeting between Corps officials and the delegation, if needed. Staff will be following up with the delegation to implement all the assistance offered and ensure the feasibility study is completed timely to meet the needs of Port Everglades.

U.S. Department of Labor Announces Special FMLA Roundtable for LGBT Community

On July 31, 2012, The U.S. Department of Labor will be hosting a special roundtable providing LGBT Community Leaders the opportunity receive valuable information about the work of the Wage and Hour Division, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act's important protections for all families, including those led by grandparents or others acting *in loco parentis*. The roundtable will take place July 31, 1:30pm at the Miami Beach City Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139. Interested parties are encouraged to register at [Roundtable Registration](#).