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NACo Annual Conference Takes Place in New Orleans

From July 11th to 14th, Commissioners Marty Kiar and Chip LaMarca, along with county staff, attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) 79th Annual Conference and Exposition in New Orleans. The conference provided county officials with an opportunity to amend and update NACo's policies and advocacy positions related to federal legislation and regulations (as discussed below).

One of the newest "Why Counties Matter" series revolved around the role of counties in economic development. The series discusses how counties are drivers of local economic development and how counties can deal with challenges affecting their respective communities. You can find more information on the link [here](#).

In addition to updating NACo's county platform, NACo steering committees also passed two resolutions of interest. The first related to the current immigration status of unaccompanied children crossing the border. Essentially, NACo asked the Administration and Congress to address the growing humanitarian crisis, to ensure that the costs of care provided to these children are not transferred to counties, and to work with the countries of origin to address the conditions that have led to this crisis.

The second resolution aimed to update the minimum wage. The original resolution urged Congress to place a cost of living adjustment (COLA) on the federally mandated minimum wage, but the COLA was removed. The final resolution stated support for Congress to "address" the minimum wage in all sectors of the economy. While there was opposition to the measure, it ultimately passed the entire body. Broward County, along with a great majority of Florida's counties attending the conference, supported both the unaccompanied children and minimum wage resolutions.

The conference is also where the presiding NACo officials ascend to new posts. President Linda Langston, now Immediate Past President, handed the torch to Riki Hokama of Maui County. Furthermore, Leon County, FL Commissioner Brian Desloge was elected to Second Vice President by a landslide! Next year's conference will be held in Mecklenburg County, NC, the seat of which is the City of Charlotte.

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Port Everglades Deepening & Widening Project

The Port Everglades Deepening & Widening project had many developments over the past quarter. On May 20th, the County received confirmation from the USACE that the outstanding environmental issues related to the project's proposed mitigation plan, had been resolved. On May 21st, the County and the Broward's Congressional Delegation met with the leadership at the USACE including Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jo Ellen Darcy as well as Steve Stockton, Director of Civil Works. Senators Nelson and Rubio, Representatives Frankel and Wasserman Schultz, and senior staff for Representatives Deutch, Diaz-Balart, Wilson, and Hastings attended the meeting to articulate the economic and operational necessity of deepening the channel to at least 48 feet. On July 25th, the County was officially informed by the USACE that they are recommending a project depth of 47 feet. This decision was explained by Major General John Peabody, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations in a Member-only meeting with Representatives Frankel, Wasserman Schultz, and Hastings. Broward County, as the non-federal sponsor, has the ability to exercise its opportunity to request a Locally Preferred Plan (LPP), in accordance with USACE Policy 1105-2-100, ensuring the Port and region realize the economic benefit a 48-foot dredge will accomplish. The LPP shall be discussed by the Board on the August 12th, 2014. The offices continue to engage General Peabody on his verbal promises for plan expediency and USACE paying for future Operations & Maintenance.

WRRDA Passes with Broward Amendments

On June 10th, President Obama signed H.R. 3080, the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA). This bill was the first comprehensive water infrastructure piece of legislation passed by Congress in 7 years. Broward County advocated for the inclusion of "pre-funding" language where local sponsors would be able to pre-fund planning, design, and construction upon completion of the final feasibility report rather than waiting for Congress to pass another WRRDA. This will significantly reduce the amount of time the County will need to complete the project once it receives the Chief of Engineers Report from USACE.

Additionally, the WRRDA also included mechanisms to streamline the approval of new water infrastructure projects and renew authorizations for beach renourishment projects. One component of the WRRDA that the County strongly supported was the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Authority, or WIFIA, which will create more flexibility for the County's Water and Wastewater Division to fund long term infrastructure needs. Moving forward, the County will be actively engaged with the USACE on the implementation of these and other provisions within the WRRDA in a series of "Listening Sessions" throughout August and September to ensure the USACE is implementing the legislation efficiently and effectively.

County Pushes for Ryan White Care Act Program Efficiencies

In April and June 2014, County staff met with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to advocate on behalf of the County's Human Services Department and the County's Ryan White Part A program servicing County residents living with HIV & AIDS. Broward County has received federal funds from the United States Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) since Fiscal Year 1991, as appropriated through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension (RWTE) Act of 2009. Part A of the RWTE provides assistance to Eligible Metropolitan Areas (EMAs) and Transitional Grant Areas (TGAs), locales that are most severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with the goal of establishing safety-net health and support services to low income and uninsured persons with HIV. The most pressing issue being addressed at the moment is the consequence of ongoing delays in the distribution of formula grants. On January 23, 2014, a Partial Notice of Grant Award from HRSA was received in the amount of \$4,248,850, due to delays in the approval of the Fiscal Year 2014 Federal Budget. In order to ensure continuity of services, on February 12, 2014, the Human Services Department exercised an option to extend the existing Provider contracts for up to six months, commencing March 1, 2014. On May 20, 2014, HRSA issued a Final Notice of Grant Award in the amount of \$11,763,912, for a total award amount of \$16,012,762. To that end, County staff met with Sylvia Trent Adams, Deputy Associate Administrator, Letita Robinson, Senior Advisor, and Steve Young, Division Director of Metropolitan HIV/AIDS Programs at HRSA. In addition to this agency outreach, the County met with authorizing and appropriating committee staff in the House and Senate to identify legislative options to expedite this process. County staff continues educating regulatory and Congressional delegation members as to the operational impacts felt in communities when funding for these vital programs are delayed and partially-withheld as has been the case for the last several years.

Go SOLAR and Renewable Energy Fest

The Go SOLAR Florida Team hosted the second annual Go SOLAR and Renewable Energy Fest on June 6-7 at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center. The FREE event featured information on alternative and renewable energy with a focus on the latest technologies, financing options and solar installation jobs and training. It is quickly becoming the premier event in South Florida to promote renewable energy and learn how to save money while using cleaner sources of energy. The Go SOLAR and Renewable Energy Fest had over 65 local, national, and international renewable energy exhibitors, 42 esteemed speakers, and over 1700 attendees over the two-day conference. Intergovernmental staff liaised with the GO SOLAR team and helped secure Representative Ted Deutch (D, FL-21) as a Plenary Session speaker for the conference attendees.

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Transportation Package to Keep Wheels Turning - Temporarily

On July 31st, Congress approved HR 5021, the Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014, which provides an extra \$10.8 billion for the US Highway Trust Fund Program, as the Senate agreed to pass the House version of the legislation. This extension will keep the Highway Trust Fund Program solvent through May, 2015 at which time another funding patch or programmatic fix will be necessary. The legislation funds the Program by changing accounting and tax requirements of corporate pension plans, additional customs fees imposed through the Department of Homeland Security, and raiding trust fund money marked to pay for leaks from underground fuel storage tanks. The passage of this act was in serious jeopardy as the bill was negotiated at the last minute before Congress' annual August recess.

Environmental Protection Agency Release Water and Carbon Rules

The public comment period on the proposed rule that defines the "Waters of the United States," which fall under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act, has been extended from July 21st to October 20th. The proposed rule would define water bodies subject to USACE and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jurisdiction as all waters susceptible to interstate commerce; all interstate waters and wetlands; all tributaries of a traditional navigable water body; and all waters with a significant nexus to a traditional navigable water body. The rule specifically exempts waste treatment systems, converted cropland, ditches that do not contribute to water flow, artificial lakes, ponds, irrigated areas, or swimming and reflection pools. The County is currently reviewing the rule and will submit clarifying comments before the deadline.

The federal government is also moving forward with its June 2nd Notice for Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) titled the Clean Power Rule, geared toward controlling carbon emissions from current power plants. The EPA is currently accepting comments from stakeholders around the country and has initiated a nationwide listening tour. Currently, the country's largest privately held coal mining company, Murray Energy Corporation, has filed a lawsuit challenging the EPA's legal justification for the rule. On August 4th, Alabama, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, South Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming filed a similar legal challenge. Furthermore, bills in both Chambers are being amended to block funding for implementation of both rules.