



2021 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. COVID RECOVERY

Support state and local government aid funding in the American Rescue Plan. This will directly benefit Monroe County (\$14.5M). Without lost revenue being an eligible expense, the County budget did not benefit from funding from the CARES Act; this new revenue will strengthen our economic recovery.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESILIENCY INVESTMENTS

Support the passage of an infrastructure bill, including a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill, that contains programs focused on resilient infrastructure investment. More investment in our surface transportation and other infrastructure programs will benefit Monroe County. The County is in the midst of a massive effort to make the Keys more resilient in the face of sea level rise and persistent severe flooding (\$1.8B for county road elevation/drainage program) and more infrastructure investment from the federal government will flow down to local governments to help our local initiatives.

3. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROGRAMS

Support funding for the following ACOE programs that directly impact Monroe County:

- **Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program (FKWQIP):** These funds repay a portion of our local funding used to provide wastewater systems throughout the Keys that have vastly improved our water quality.
- **Everglades Restoration:** Restoration efforts that bring more clean, fresh water from the Everglades south to Florida Bay significantly improves the health of Florida Bay, which is critical to us from an environmental perspective as well as a tourism perspective due to fishing, etc. The massive seagrass beds of the Florida Bay support highly productive recreation and commercial fisheries. The Florida Bay ecosystem is threatened by hypersalinity conditions that result from insufficient flows of fresh water.
- **Monroe County, FL Coastal Storm Mitigation Feasibility Study:** Monroe County is currently partnering with the ACOE on a 3-yr study using prior-approved hurricane supplemental funding from Congress to propose storm damage mitigation strategies. Upon conclusion of the study, the study will need federal authorization and construction funding to implement the Study's recommended mitigation strategies (which may include US 1 revetments, home elevations, commercial flood-proofing).

4. NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM (EWP)

In 2017, Monroe County suffered through Hurricane Irma, causing canals to fill with debris and sediment, along with extensive damage to public and private property. Toxic chemicals clogged once-navigable waterways and damaged significant ecosystems, including portions of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Through the EWP, Monroe County was awarded \$45.8 million dollars for the cleanup of marine debris and sediment from waterways in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. However, NRCS initially denied Monroe's participation and ultimately refused to remove debris from nearly 200 canals the County submitted to the program (more than 40 percent of the canals requested for cleanup).

Support programmatic changes to the EWP that clarify and confirm Monroe County's eligibility as a sponsor pursuant to 7 CFR 624, ensuring its ability to receive funding to aid in future emergency and disaster response, including:

- Request that NRCS publish a new rule that removes any question as to the whether the County qualifies for EWP funds for waterway debris removal in a disaster relief scenario.
- Request that NRCS revise the Program Guidelines for the EWP to prioritize National Marine Sanctuaries for funding and to include a definition for "watershed" that describes Monroe County, as there is no existing definition within EWP program rules or guidance for the term "watershed."

5. CORAL REEF CONSERVATION

Support the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act (H.R. 160 and S. 46) and other efforts to address coral reef restoration. The Florida Keys coral reef tract is a vital, unique – and fragile -- part of our ecosystem. Its health is continuously endangered by bleaching, disease and warming water temperature. The legislation passed the Senate last year, but failed to pass the House before the close of the last Congress.

6. HURRICANE AND DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING

Support funding for post-disaster recovery efforts, including funding for the Natural Resource Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, CDBG-Disaster Recovery, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, and FEMA reimbursements.

7. SUPPORT RE-AUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM (NFIP) THAT PROTECTS AFFORDABILITY

Affordable flood insurance protects property owners, property values, local tax revenue, and economic activity. As a coastal community, Monroe County is highly reliant upon the continuation of the NFIP program and its affordability. Coastal communities generate **80% of the State of Florida's GDP** and **46% of the entire national GDP**. NFIP is important because it is protective of the economic engines that coastal communities represent to the State of Florida and nationwide. The State of Florida is the most impacted by changes to NFIP with **1.7m of NFIP's 5m policies, with \$430B** in insured value.

- Monroe County supports the following reforms:
 - Maintain focus on *affordability* - provide a capped annual increase (10%) for all properties;
 - Ensure rates are *consistent* for all properties, including second homes and businesses;
 - Make the rate-setting process more *transparent*;
 - Reduce *commissions* for Write-Your-Owns and incentivize their NFIP policy sales efforts;
 - *Enforce* flood insurance coverage for properties in the 100-year floodplain;
 - Ensure that any increased *privatization must protect affordability* and consumer protections, and requires whole profile of risk (no cherry picking);
 - Increase federal investment in *flood mitigation* (up to a 6:1 return on investment).

8. SUPPORT FUNDING CRITICAL TO PROTECTING THE FLORIDA KEYS

- **PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT):** **Support** full and long-term mandatory funding of the PILT program.
- **SOUTH FLORIDA GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAM:** **Support** full funding of the South Florida Geographic Program in the annual Interior Appropriations bill.
- **EVERGLADES RESTORATION AND FLORIDA BAY:** **Support** funding for EAA Reservoir and CEPP and construction of the other elements of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project to improve clean freshwater flow to Florida Bay.

9. SUPPORT SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

- **Older Americans Act** programs that support critical social service programs serving elder persons in Monroe County.
- **Veterans Affairs** programs to support education and the Transition Assistance Program.
- The **Social Services Block Grant** program.
- HUD's **Continuum of Care** program to support our local homeless assistance initiatives.

10. OPPOSE OIL DRILLING AND EXPLORATION, LEASE EXPANSION AND SEISMIC TESTING

Support the protection of federal lands in Florida, including the Everglades, federal waters on Florida's Outer Continental Shelf, along the Atlantic seaboard of the United States, east of the Military Mission Line in the Gulf of Mexico, and within the boundaries of Florida's territorial seas from oil drilling, exploration and testing.

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