

Monroe County, Florida 2022 Federal Legislative Agenda





**Prepared by Thorn Run Partners for the
Monroe County Board of County Commissioners**

**Mayor David Rice
Mayor Pro Tem Craig Cates
Commissioner Michelle Coldiron
Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein
Commissioner Jim Scholl**

Roman Gastesi, County Administrator

Lisa Tennyson, Legislative Affairs Director

Questions regarding the information in this book may be directed to:

**Greg Burns
(202) 849-8523**

**Lisa Tennyson
(305) 292-4441**



Table of Contents

Federal Legislative Agenda Summary	Page 3
<u>Primary Issues</u>	
1. Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations: Card Sound Bridge and Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study	Page 5
2. Infrastructure and Resiliency Investments	Page 6
3. Army Corps of Engineers Programs – Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study, Everglades Restoration, & Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program	Page 9
4. Natural Resource Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program	Page 11
5. National Flood Insurance Program	Page 13
6. Coral Reef Restoration	Page 15
7. Payments In Lieu of Taxes	Page 16
<u>Other Issues</u>	
1. Land Acquisition	Page 17
2. Federal Aviation Administration – Key West Airport Issues	Page 19
3. Veterans Affairs Issues	Page 20
4. Oil and Gas Drilling and Oil Spill Protection	Page 22
5. Social Service Programs	Page 24
6. Public Safety Programs	Page 26
7. Naval Air Station, Key West Base Realignment and Closure	Page 27



Monroe County 2022 Federal Legislative Agenda

Primary Issues

Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations: Card Sound Bridge and Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study

Support \$1,863,200 in federal funding from the FY 2023 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, Highway Infrastructure Projects account for the Card Sound Bridge Replacement Planning, Design & Engineering Project. **Support** \$1,040,000 in federal funding from the FY 2023 Energy & Water Appropriations bill, Army Corps of Engineers, Investigations account to fund the federal share of planning, engineering and design for the US 1 Revetments and Shoreline Stabilization portion of the Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Project.

Infrastructure and Resiliency Investments

Monitor implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. **Support** all opportunities to secure funding for Monroe County's infrastructure priorities. Support the development of funding programs to assist with the implementation of more robust resilience infrastructure and to assist with long-term operations and maintenance costs. **Monitor** federal climate change legislation and executive actions. **Support** federal efforts to address climate change and mitigate sea level rise. **Support** the federal legislative priorities of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

Army Corps of Engineers Programs – Monroe County Storm Risk Management Study, Everglades Restoration, & Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program

Support funding for Army Corps of Engineers programs that directly support Monroe County, including for the Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management project, the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program, and Everglades Restoration.

Natural Resource Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Support changes to the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection program or develop new authorities for another agency to effectively manage removal of debris in all nearshore marine environments to appropriately respond to future disasters in the Florida Keys.

National Flood Insurance Program

Support efforts to improve the National Flood Insurance Program for the benefit of all participants. **Support** legislation to limit annual rate increases to no greater than 9% per year for all policyholders, thereby limiting the impact of the new Risk Rating 2.0 pricing methodology. **Monitor** FEMA's next steps regarding changes to the NFIP Floodplain Management Standards. **Support** prohibition of the issuance of flood insurance for new development on properties in the Florida Keys that contain known or suitable habitat for federally-listed endangered species.

Coral Reef Restoration

Support the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act and any efforts to address coral reef restoration.

Payments In Lieu of Taxes

Support full, long-term mandatory funding of the Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which enables local governments to rely upon PILT funds when budgeting.



Other Issues

Land Acquisition

Support federal funding to acquire appropriate properties to mitigate environmental resource or military encroachment concerns in Monroe County.

Federal Aviation Administration – Key West Airport Issues

Support annual appropriations to match authorized amounts for the Airport Improvement Program. **Support** Monroe County’s grant proposals for funding through the FAA Airport Improvement Program. **Support** federal funding for sound attenuation activities around military air facilities.

Veterans Affairs Issues

Support improvements to the VA Mission Act that will allow Monroe County veterans to fully benefit from the law. **Support** additional educational benefits for our nation’s veterans to allow them to attend post-secondary schools more quickly after service concludes. **Support** improvements to the VA Transition Assistance Program that will help support veterans as they transition to civilian life, including an opportunity to reattend the program should they desire to in the future.

Oil and Gas Drilling and Oil Spill Protection

Oppose the potential expansion of energy exploration in Florida. **Support** revisions to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and other associated laws to ensure that local governments may act as first responders in an effort to protect local communities and be reimbursed for their actions undertaken to protect their resources and restore damaged areas during oil spill events, and the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund is capable of addressing Spills of National Significance where there is not a financially viable or legally responsible party.

Social Service Programs

Support continued adequate annual funding the Continuum of Care homeless response program, Older Americans Act programs that support programs serving elderly persons, and for the Social Services Block Grant program, all of which support critical social services to Monroe County.

Public Safety Programs

Support continued funding for the wide variety of DOJ and DHS grants, i.e., Community Oriented Policing Services, Byrne Justice Assistance Grants, Emergency Management Preparedness Grants, Assistance to Firefighters Grants, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants, Urban Areas Security Initiative grants, and other security-specific grants. **Support** any Monroe County applications for these funds.

Naval Air Station, Key West Base Realignment and Closure

Monitor activities related to the Department of Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission for potential impacts to Naval Air Station, Key West.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations: Card Sound Bridge and Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Monroe County made two Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 appropriations requests of Congressman Gimenez this year after having successfully secured funding in FY 2022 for the Twin Lakes mitigation project.

Card Sound Bridge

Card Sound Bridge is one of 26 bridges that Monroe County maintains throughout the County. The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners supports the Card Sound Bridge replacement project because it is a critical part of our county road network, is one of only two evacuation routes from the Florida Keys to the mainland, and needs replacement.

The Card Sound Bridge was constructed in 1969 and is scheduled for replacement to ensure the continued safety of the transportation route. Monroe County requests funding for 80 percent of the estimated cost for the PD&E phase of the project. The remaining 20 percent of the estimated cost will be funded by local revenues.

Monroe County CSRM (discussed in a later Army Corps Section)

Monroe County has for the past several years partnered with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on a CSRM feasibility study using previously approved hurricane supplemental funding from Congress to propose storm damage mitigation strategies for the County.

The Monroe County project has three main components:

- 1) Stabilization of US 1
- 2) Dry floodproofing of 53 critical buildings
- 3) Elevation and dry floodproofing of residential and nonresidential buildings

It is anticipated that stabilization of US 1 will occur first, with Planning, Engineering, and Design (PED) to be followed by construction, should funding be provided by Congress. After that, additional PED would be required to implement the other phases of the project. The PED phase is cost-shared 65% - 35% and the County is working with the Florida Department of Transportation, the owner of US 1, to assist with the non-federal costs of PED. The federal share of the PED phase for the US 1 revetment is \$1,040,000.

POSITION: *Support* \$1,863,200 in federal funding from the FY 2023 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, Highway Infrastructure Projects account for the Card Sound Bridge Replacement Planning, Design & Engineering Project. *Support* \$1,040,000 in federal funding from the FY 2023 Energy & Water Appropriations bill, Army Corps of Engineers, Investigations account to fund the federal share of planning, engineering and design for the US 1 Revetments and Shoreline Stabilization portion of the Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Project.

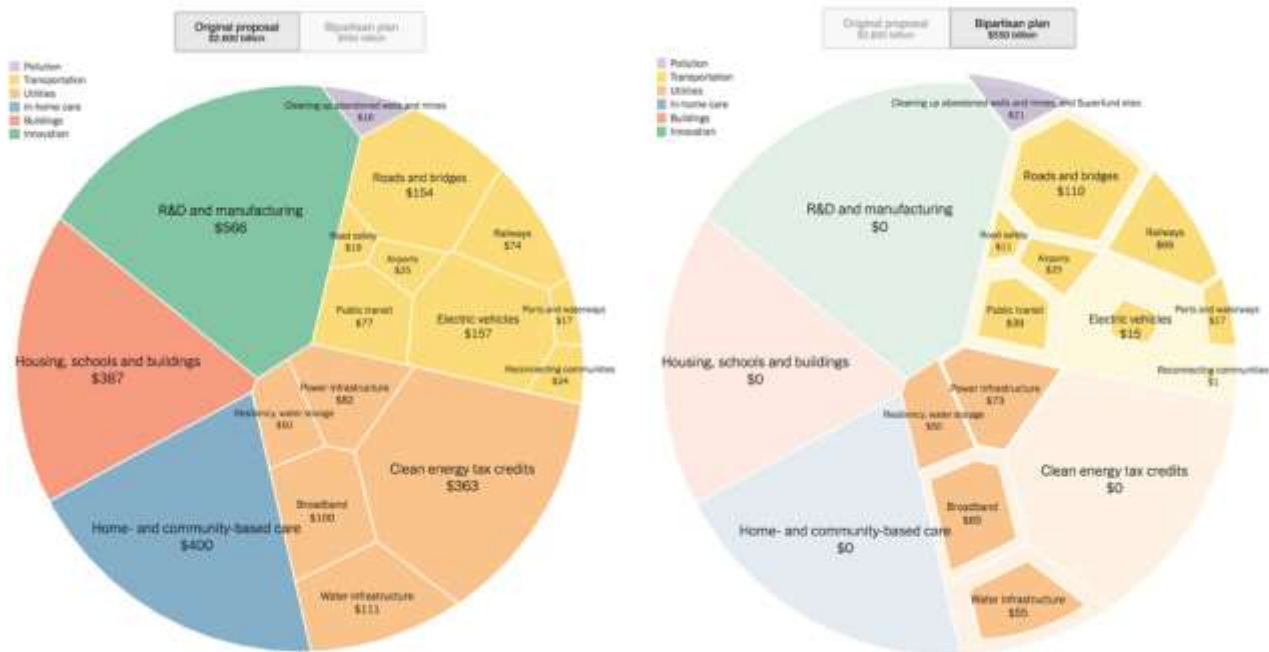


FEDERAL ISSUE: Infrastructure and Resiliency Investments

BACKGROUND: HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Last year, Congress passed the 2,700+ page Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) after months of speculation, negotiation, and debate. The roughly \$1.2 trillion measure is split almost in half between two main components:

- 1) A five-year surface transportation reauthorization to continue upon the expiration of the previous authorization known as the FAST Act; and
- 2) Roughly \$550 billion in additional investment in infrastructure, generally intended to be spent over five years, more than half of which will go towards transportation.

President Biden initially proposed spending \$2.6 trillion on physical infrastructure, whereas the BIL instead includes \$550 billion in new spending above the transportation authorization bill. A visual representation of the broad differences between the two plans follows:



Broadly speaking, the IIJA proposes the following in new, above baseline spending above what is proposed as an extension of surface transportation programs, with more than half of the funding going towards transportation:

- **Transportation:** \$284 billion
 - **Roads & Bridges:** \$110 billion
 - **Transit:** \$39 billion
 - **Rail:** \$66 billion
 - **Safety:** \$11 billion
 - **Airports:** \$25 billion
 - **Ports & Waterways:** \$17 billion
 - **Electric Vehicle Chargers:** \$7.5 billion
 - **Electric Buses:** \$7.5 billion
 - **Reconnecting Communities:** \$1 billion
- **Water:** \$55 billion
- **Broadband:** \$65 billion



- **Energy & Power:** \$73 billion
- **Environmental Remediation:** \$21 billion
- **Western Water Infrastructure:** \$8.3 billion
- **Resiliency:** \$46 billion

The Department of Transportation will have a tremendous influence over where a large percentage of the new funding for transportation is spent: more than \$105 million will be provided via competitive grant applications – more than 1/3rd of the overall funding.

Some programs that may be of most interest to Monroe County include:

- **Bridge Investment Program:** \$36.74 billion over 5 years
 - \$27.5 billion via formula and \$9.24 billion via competitive application
 - For large and small bridge projects
- **EV Charging Grants -- \$2.5 billion; 5 years; 5 application periods**
 - Two types of opportunities: General Grants and Community Grants (the latter MUCH more relevant to Monroe)
 - Community Grants will be awarded to applicants targeting new charging infrastructure located on public roads, schools, parks, and in publicly accessible parking facilities. These grants will be prioritized for rural areas, low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, and communities with low ratios of private parking or high ratios of multiunit dwellings. Grants capped at \$15M per award.
 - This is in addition to the \$5B state formula grant program.
- **PROTECT Grant Program -- \$1.4 billion; 5 years; 5 application periods**
 - Intended to strengthen infrastructure in the face of severe weather events and natural disasters, with an emphasis on flooding, but with other eligible uses relating to wildfire mitigation and sea-level rise.
 - Divided among four programs: Planning Grants (\$140M), Resilience Improvement Grants (\$980M), Community Resilience and Evacuation Route Grants (\$140M), and At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure Grants (\$140M)
 - This is in addition to the \$7.3B state formula grant program
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC):** \$1 billion over 5 years (additional funding above what will otherwise be provided).
 - Competitive application.
 - Formerly known as the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program.

Resiliency and Sea Level Rise

The Florida Keys is on the forefront of climate change, already experiencing impacts from sea level rise, including widespread road flooding during the king tide seasons. Residents can also anticipate increased hurricane intensity, higher heat indexes, and a host of other related changes that impact access, health, the economy, ability of government to provide local services, etc. Given the County's vulnerabilities to sea-level rise, as well as its international presence as a premier tourist destination, Monroe County must demonstrate leadership through the implementation of key policies, practices, and investments that will allow the County and its residents to prepare for the impacts of climate change. As a result, the County is developing and enacting local projects, programs, and policies to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

In 2016, Monroe County completed GreenKeys, a comprehensive study on the effects of local sea level rise and climate change mitigation strategies. The study utilized a planning scenario for sea level rise of 9 to 24 inches in



the next fifty years. The data indicated that even using a conservative projection of sea level rise, numerous County roads and portions of the County could expect to see significant flooding on a regular basis.

Sea level rise predictions were updated by the SE FL Climate Compact in December 2019. The 2019 projection, the Compact's third *Unified Regional SLR Projection*, provided an update to the amount of projected sea level rise in Southeast Florida through 2120. These projections represent a consensus from a technical Work Group, including members from the academic community and local, state and federal agencies, and incorporates the most up-to-date, peer-reviewed literature, and climate modeling data.

In 2021, the U.S. Army Corps, in partnership with Monroe County, completed a 3-year study for the Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Feasibility Management Study to determine what was needed to make the Keys more resilient to storms and sea level rise. The final Plan recommendations include \$2.7 Billion of infrastructure adaptations, including \$2.3 Billion in home elevations, \$424 Million in floodproofing for critical infrastructure and businesses, and \$17.6 Million for shoreline revetments along U.S.1. Projects would be funded at 65% federal and 35% non-federal.

Also in 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1954, providing a coordinated approach to Florida's coastal and inland resiliency. The new program enhances the State's efforts to protect inland waterways, coastlines and shores, and is anticipated to serve as natural defenses against sea level rise. The legislation provides investments to prepare communities for the impacts of climate change – including sea level rise, intensified storms, and flooding.

In 2022, the County is completing a study to determine how to prepare its road infrastructure for the future. At a cost of \$1.6 Billion, half of the County's 311 miles of County-maintained roads will need to be elevated by the year 2045 to maintain access to homes and businesses. The Study indicates modifications to private properties will also need to be undertaken to provide resilience from advancing seas. County officials will develop revised policies as to which adaptation features will be allowed on those private properties. Because of the sensitive marine environment of the Keys, such policy discussions will not be easy.

Funding options must be developed to help fund these enormous infrastructure costs and to assist with long-term operations and maintenance costs.

Other communities in Florida also recognize the risk climate change poses to their citizens, infrastructure, and economies. Monroe County partnered with Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties in 2010 to form the *Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact* to coordinate climate mitigation and adaptation activities across county lines. The Compact represents a strong form of regional climate collaboration designed to allow localities to plan for adaptation while providing an efficient means for state and federal agencies to engage with technical assistance and support. The success of the Compact has allowed it to be replicated in other communities in Florida and other States to help communities prepare plans for climate change.

POSITION: *Monitor* implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. *Support* all opportunities to secure funding for Monroe County's infrastructure priorities. Support the development of funding programs to assist with the implementation of more robust resilience infrastructure and to assist with long-term operations and maintenance costs. *Monitor* federal climate change legislation and executive actions. *Support* federal efforts to address climate change and mitigate sea level rise. *Support* the federal legislative priorities of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Army Corps of Engineers Programs – Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study, Everglades Restoration, & Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY:

Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management Study (CSRМ)

Monroe County has for the past several years partnered with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on a CSRМ feasibility study using previously-approved hurricane supplemental funding from Congress to propose storm damage mitigation strategies for the County. The study received a Chief of Engineers report on September 24, 2021 and is awaiting construction authorization via the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which is expected to be passed this year. The Monroe County authorization is in both the House and Senate versions of WRDA.

The Monroe County project proposed for authorization has three main components:

- 4) Stabilization of US 1
- 5) Dry floodproofing of 53 critical buildings
- 6) Elevation and dry floodproofing of residential and nonresidential buildings

It is anticipated that stabilization of US 1 will occur first, with Planning, Engineering, and Design (PED) to be followed by construction, should funding be provided by Congress. After that, additional PED would be required to implement the other phases of the project.

The PED phase is cost-shared 65% - 35% and the County is working with the Florida Department of Transportation, the owner of US 1, to assist with the non-federal costs of PED. The federal share of the PED phase for the US 1 revetment is \$1,040,000.

The benefit to cost ratio of the project is 1.5 to 1. Any project advanced by the Corps of Engineers must have a positive benefit to cost ratio. The Administration also uses the benefit to cost ratios when making annual budgeting decisions, making this an important metric for the project.

Everglades Restoration

Florida Bay is a large shallow lagoon bordered to the north by the Florida peninsula and to the south and east by the Florida Keys. A portion of the bay is located within Everglades National Park and is protected by the National Park Service (NPS), with the remainder lying within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, which falls under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. The Bay provides unique and critical habitat for many plants and animals, including several endangered species such as the Florida Manatee.

The NPS began long-term monitoring of Florida Bay in 1988 to collect and analyze hydrologic and salinity data from the Bay. At this same time, the Bay was suffering from tremendous (approximately 23,000 acres) of sea grass die off from hyper saline conditions with resulting algal blooms. Salinity levels are considered the primary driver of ecological conditions within the bay. Salinity levels are also the driver to maintain the state-established Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) for Florida Bay, an ecosystem-based protective standard established under Florida law.



The construction of water control structures and facilities within the Everglades throughout the 20th century has altered the natural hydrologic patterns of water in the region. This has reduced the flow of freshwater into Florida Bay and changed the ecosystem. Managing these water flows to reduce the severity and frequency of hypersalinity events and algal blooms are among the goals of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

There are several projects under various stages of development that are expected to improve the health of Florida Bay. These include the Central Everglades Planning Project, the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir, Modified Water Deliveries, Tamiami Trail reconstruction, C-111 South Dade, and the C-111 Spreader Canal project, among others.

Recently, the biggest news for Everglades restoration is the unprecedented level of funding provided or recommended for restoration. Specifically, the federal government has or will provide roughly \$1.8 billion for Everglades restoration via FY 2021, 2022, and 2023 appropriations bills plus the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

Florida Keys Water Quality Improvements Program

In 2001, Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assist with implementation of infrastructure improvements in the Florida Keys to improve nearshore water quality within the Sanctuary. Public Law 106-554 authorized the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvements Program (FKWQIP), whereby the Corps may provide up to \$100 million in technical and financial assistance to carry out projects for the planning, design, and construction of treatment works to improve water quality in the Sanctuary. The primary purpose is to improve water quality in the Florida Keys through implementation of several wastewater and stormwater master plans previously prepared for Monroe County's municipalities. The South Florida Water Management District is the non-federal Sponsor for FKWQIP.

Congress provided \$6 million in additional funding for FKWQIP through their FY 2022 Omnibus Appropriations bill. To date, FKWQIP has received \$78 million in funding from the federal government.

Most recently, and quite notably, the House version of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 includes language increasing the authorization of FKWQIP from \$100 to \$200 million, thereby offering additional funding opportunities for the region should the provision become law.

POSITION: *Support* funding for Army Corps of Engineers programs that directly support Monroe County, including for the Monroe County Coastal Storm Risk Management project, the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program, and Everglades Restoration.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Natural Resource Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: In 2017, Monroe County suffered through Hurricane Irma, causing canals throughout the Florida Keys 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 Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, Monroe County was able to partner with the federal government to use \$49.2 million for the cleanup of marine debris and sediment from waterways in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, which we matched with \$10 million of local funding.

While the NRCS EWP program proved to be a critical resource for the County, unfortunately it only partially solved the canal debris and sediment challenges of the Keys. Of the 422 canals submitted to NRCS for marine debris removal, 175 or 41.5 percent were not approved. Meanwhile, of 34 canals that were submitted for sediment removal, 21 or 67.7 percent were not approved. To summarize:

NRCS EWP Program	Marine Debris Removal	Percent	Sediment Removal	Percent
Rejected Canals	175	41.5%	21	67.7%
Approved Canals	247	58.5%	11	32.3%
Total Canals Submitted by Monroe County	422	100	34	100

Challenges with NRCS EWP Program:

With respect to the NRCS EWP program, the County had to go through an arduous and expensive process to secure the funding it ultimately did for a partial cleanup of marine debris. The process for NRCS to approve or reject individual canals took too long if the intent is to protect an area from future storm damage and flooding. Even though Irma occurred in September 2017, NRCS was still approving 76 canals for debris removal in July 2019, almost two years later. To secure approval, the County had to conduct side sonar scanning to calculate exact volumetric analyses and significant flood capacity modeling, all of which were time and resource intensive requirements. The EWP program has also seemingly become a flood avoidance program, essentially to avoid future flooding from other storms; there is little to no consideration given to environmental concerns. Ultimately, the EWP program only approved Monroe County canals for cleanup if hydrologic conditions were impacted by debris, thereby ignoring the environmental degradation of the debris remaining in the canals – of which there is still too much.

Need to Improve Post-Storm Marine Debris Removal Program: Despite the federal government’s clear recognition that marine debris after a storm is a serious problem that deserves federal attention and support, none of the programs in existence appropriately deal with debris under water. For example:

- Funding to Coast Guard programs is meant to respond to derelict vessels.
- FEMA’s funding can remove marine debris, but their criteria is limited only to navigational hazards, meaning that they will only address limited depths and will not remove all the debris present.



- NOAA funding can address marine debris, but they have limited funding and focus on environmental hazards. We do not believe any NOAA marine debris money was spent in the Keys after Irma.

FEMA will pay to remove all land-based debris that sits above the water line. Yet, in coastal communities throughout the country, whose waterways are as important as roads or other public infrastructure, there is not a similar program that is all-encompassing and thorough for marine debris. This inequity must be addressed by Congress, either by appropriately refocusing and adjusting the NRCS EWP program or by developing a new program to comprehensively address marine debris.

POSITION: *Support* changes to the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection program or develop new authorities for another agency to effectively manage removal of debris in all nearshore marine environments to appropriately respond to future disasters in the Florida Keys.



FEDERAL ISSUE: National Flood Insurance Program

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: In 1968, Congress established the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to address the nation's flood exposure and challenges inherent in financing and managing flood risks in the private sector. Private insurance companies at the time claimed that the flood peril was uninsurable and, therefore, could not be underwritten in the private insurance market. A three-prong floodplain management and insurance program was created to identify areas across the nation most at risk of flooding, minimize the economic impact of flooding events through floodplain management ordinances, and provide flood insurance to individuals and businesses.

In mid-2012, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Act (BW12), a 5-year reauthorization of the NFIP that attempted to restore the program to firmer financial footing by making changes to the program that impacted the Island's residents. Then, in early 2014, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act (HFIAA), was enacted to address some of the so-called unintended consequences of BW12. While HFIAA delayed many of the premium increases implemented by BW12, the only real difference between rate increases envisioned by the two bills is that HFIAA reinstated grandfathering. This provision, originally ended by BW12, allows certain property owners to pay flood insurance rates based on original risk, not that which is determined by new community flood maps.

Authorization of the NFIP expires on September 30, 2022. In Monroe County, there are 30,956 NFIP policies for both homes and commercial properties.

Risk Rating 2.0

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) continues to implement the [Risk Rating 2.0](#) (RR2) pricing methodology for the NFIP. FEMA estimates that roughly 3.8 million policyholders will pay higher premiums, while 1.2 million policyholders will see rate decreases. For coastal communities like Monroe County, far higher percentages of policy holders are seeing rate increases, not decreases. As of April 1, 2022, RR2 is in effect for all NFIP policyholders. Changes to premiums will take place upon the policyholder's first renewal after this date.

Several members of Congress and members of the Senate continue to advocate that the implementation of RR2 should be delayed and have written [letters](#), proposed [various legislation](#), and [called](#) on the Administration to carry out the delay.

Finally, House Financial Services Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA) has proposed legislation that, among other things, would limit annual flood insurance rate increases to 9 percent, down from 18 percent allowed under current law. Based on statements to the media, FEMA seems supportive of this annual rate increase cap.

NFIP Floodplain Management Standards for Land Management and Use

Late last year, FEMA released a Request for Information (RFI) primarily to seek feedback on updating the NFIP's floodplain management standards for land management and use regulations for communities that participate in the flood insurance program. The standards have not been substantially updated since 1976.

It is not hard to imagine that the RFI may lead to dramatic changes in the NFIP. This could include increased elevation for new construction or substantial renovation, mandate the construction of critical facilities outside of 500-year flood zones, require mapping, regulation, and mandatory purchase of flood insurance in 500-year or 1000-year flood plains, ensure climate change impacts in new flood map modeling, and lead to additional



restriction or purchase requirements in areas of so-called residual risk. These potential changes to the NFIP are all separate from the Risk Rating 2.0 effort that is increasing flood insurance rates nationwide for many.

Monroe County Position

Monroe County supports reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) with legislative, policy and programmatic modifications to improve the affordability and transparency of the program through reforms in the following areas:

- 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).

Monroe County Endangered Species Considerations

In addition, Monroe County is home to over a dozen species that are listed by the federal government as either being threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This led to decades long litigation by environmental groups who challenged the issuance of flood insurance in the Keys on the basis that this insurance encourages and subsidizes development which ultimately jeopardizes the listed species. That litigation led to an injunction against the issuance of flood insurance on up to 50,000 parcels of property in the county which lasted for seven years. Amending the NFIP to prohibit the issuance of flood insurance for new development on known or suitable habitat for listed species would protect those species, conserve the expenditure of federal resources, and help the County reduce its exposure to property rights claims brought due to federal, state, and local regulations that have been developed to preserve this same habitat.

POSITION: *Support* efforts to improve the National Flood Insurance Program for the benefit of all participants. *Support* legislation to limit annual rate increases to no greater than 9% per year for all policyholders, thereby limiting the impact of the new Risk Rating 2.0 pricing methodology. *Monitor* FEMA's next steps regarding changes to the NFIP Floodplain Management Standards. *Support* prohibition of the issuance of flood insurance for new development on properties in the Florida Keys that contain known or suitable habitat for federally-listed endangered species.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Coral Reef Restoration

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: The Florida Reef Tract stretches from the Dry Tortugas in Monroe County to the St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County. It is the only barrier reef in the continental United States and is the third largest barrier reef in the world. The Florida Reef Tract continues to face the most serious coral disease epidemic on record globally. The disease outbreak began in 2014 near Key Biscayne in Miami-Dade County. The disease has since spread across the Reef Tract, both north and south. To date, almost all of the Reef Tract has been impacted. Once infected, coral colonies typically die within weeks or months. Florida's coral reefs have traditionally attracted over 16 million visitors a year and provide over 71,000 local jobs.

Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act in 2000, which authorized appropriations to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for coral reef protection and management activities through 2004. While the authorization for the overall program expired in 2004, Congress has continued to fund the CRCP through the annual appropriations process. Funding for coral reef programs has remained stable, with the program receiving nearly \$30 million for the past several fiscal years.

Members of the Florida, Hawaii and Puerto Rico delegations have introduced the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act, which would modernize and reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. Generally speaking, the bills offer:

- A 5-year authorization with an explicit focus on restoration activities where natural disasters and human activities have degraded reef ecosystems;
- Directed federal funding and technical assistance so States and impacted communities can drive priorities and management of coral reef ecosystems, such as a State Block Grant, and other incentives for further community participation and investment through new Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships;
- New avenues for the provision of emergency funds to ensure rapid and effective responses to coral reef emergencies including disease outbreaks, invasive species, coral bleaching, natural disasters, vessel groundings, hazardous spills, and coastal construction accidents;
- Overlapping federal, state, and local planning responsibilities and inducements for collaboration to support improved capacity-building at the State and local levels;
- Enhanced assessment and reporting procedures to document, measure, and analyze planning, management, and restoration outcomes to drive increasing efficacy in future coral reef interventions;
- Codifies and updates the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force previously established by Executive Order, and provides the Secretary of the Interior with the authority to provide scientific expertise, technical assistance, and financial assistance for management and restoration activities.

In 2019, the Senate passed the RRRRA via Unanimous Consent (requiring the approval of all 100 Senators). In 2022, the House passed the bill as part of a larger legislative package, one that is currently in conference between the House and Senate. Monroe County has a long history of championing protections for the Florida Reef Tract at both the state and federal level.

POSITION: *Support* the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act and any efforts to address coral reef restoration.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Payments In Lieu of Taxes

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Under law, federally-owned lands within a local government's boundary cannot be taxed, but these lands still create a demand for services, including firefighting and police protection, construction of roads, and search-and-rescue operations. Congress has created several programs in an attempt to compensate local governments, particularly counties, for these losses to their tax base. One of these programs from which Monroe County benefits is the Payments in Lieu of Taxes program (PILT).

Congress passed the Payments In Lieu of Taxes Act in 1976 (Public Law 94-565) to help offset the impact from these losses to local governments' tax bases through annual compensation. The PILT program is administered by the Department of Interior.

Payments are made annually for tax-exempt federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and for federal water projects and some military installations. The authorized level of PILT payments is calculated under a complex formula that includes five factors affecting Monroe County's compensation: the number of acres eligible for PILT payments, the County's population, payments in prior years from other specified federal land payment programs, state laws directing payments to a particular government purpose, and the Consumer Price Index.

Generally, Monroe County now receives about \$1.3 million annually from PILT payments. A total of 454,867 acres, which is roughly 19 percent of the County's land, is eligible for compensation.

POSITION: *Support* full, long-term mandatory funding of the Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which enables local governments to rely upon PILT funds when budgeting.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Land Acquisition

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: The federal nexus for Monroe County's land acquisition challenges are generally based upon two basic principles: a) rigorous preservation of the Florida Keys' unique environmental resources, which are protected under a variety of federal laws including the Endangered Species Act, and b) the need to protect Naval Air Station Key West, one of the military's premier air combat training facilities, from encroachment.

Monroe County contains several unique environmental resources of national significance. In recognition of the value of these resources and features, the federal government has created four national wildlife refuges (Crocodile Lake, Great White Heron, Key Deer, and Key West), three national parks (Everglades, Biscayne, and Dry Tortugas), as well as a National Marine Sanctuary (Florida Keys) and a National Preserve (Big Cypress), all of which are located in whole or in part in Monroe County. In addition, Monroe County is also home to a world-renowned coral reef and over 30 listed species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

To protect these scarce yet vital natural resources, development on private property in Monroe County is heavily controlled by federal, state, and local regulations. To see the significant impact of federal regulations on the County's ability to regulate local development, one need to look no further than the Florida Key Deer v. the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) & US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) suit settled in 2012 after more than 20 years of litigation. USFWS and FEMA negotiated a settlement agreement with environmental advocates that forced the County to adopt regulations and procedures to assist the USFWS with performing its obligations under the ESA or face expulsion from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The County had little choice but to implement procedures that essentially shifted the burden of implementation of the ESA from the USFWS to Monroe County.

That settlement agreement was predicated upon the USFWS's revised Biological Opinion (BO) on the NFIP in Monroe County. The BO contained reasonable and prudent alternatives (RPA) that required the Florida Keys communities to revise their Flood Damage Prevention programs to include the review of floodplain development applications for potential impacts to nine endangered species – a review the ESA requires FEMA and USFWS to undertake, not local governments.

According to the data contained in the BO, there are 63,411 acres of suitable habitat for listed species in unincorporated Monroe County. There are approximately 6,000 privately owned vacant parcels, having an approximate combined value of \$627 million, within USFWS designated potentially suitable habitat. While the BO only addresses protections for nine species, twenty-two federally-listed species live in the Florida Keys and critical habitat has been designated for eleven of these species. In addition, the USFWS proposes to list (and subsequently designate critical habitat for) an additional five (5) species in the Florida Keys soon.

The limitations upon development imposed by the ESA and other federal, state, and local regulations impose severe restrictions on private property owners who desire to develop their properties. The U.S. and Florida Constitutions require government to compensate private property owners when those regulations result in a taking.

The County realizes the importance of preserving and sharing the benefits of our unique natural resources, and has conducted the reviews for FEMA and FWS, including restricting development based on this process, but federal support is required to maintain the protection of our significant environment. The Keys supports and encourages



the federal government to target the acquisition of lands containing suitable habitat for and known populations of federally-designated wildlife species.

In addition to the land acquisition challenges resulting from environmental protection regulations, the County faces challenges in the area surrounding Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West, one of the military's premier air combat training facilities. The airfield is located just outside of Key West in the most densely populated area of the County. The impact of encroachment from development, both past and future, in the vicinity of NAS Key West further exacerbates the land acquisition challenges for Monroe County. While the County wants to foster the continued use of the airfield, it must also be mindful of encroachment challenges due to property owners in the adjacent community. Acquisition of nearby properties can help solve that challenge.

In order to proactively address these land acquisition challenges, the County has engaged in land acquisition efforts primarily through the Monroe County Land Authority. The Land Authority has two dedicated State-authorized revenue sources through which it funds land acquisition (half of the one cent tourist impact tax, and a State park surcharge). Unfortunately, these sources are insufficient, given the need to purchase approximately 6,000 privately owned parcels of land, as they generate only about \$2.6 million annually. However, in recent years, the County Commission budgeted additional local funds to serve as a match for federal and state land acquisition projects. Even with that additional funding, the County lacks the financial resources to meet all the land acquisition needs that result from federal and state environmental protection regulations as well as encroachment issues arising near NAS Key West. Solving the County's land acquisition challenge can only be done through a combination of federal, state, and local efforts.

Funding Opportunities

It is possible that the Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program could help fund land acquisition projects, as could the Department of Defense's (DoD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI). The latter funds cost-sharing partnerships for the military with state and local governments to address incompatible development and loss of habitat around DoD installations.

Most recently, a new partnership between federal agencies and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, entitled the America the Beautiful Challenge, may also offer opportunities for land acquisition and conservation in the future.

POSITION: *Support* federal funding to acquire appropriate properties to mitigate environmental resource or military encroachment concerns in Monroe County.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Federal Aviation Administration – Key West Airport Issues

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: In 2018, Congress passed and the President signed, a five year reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The bill authorized level funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), at \$3.35 billion for each of the next five years, while also authorizing an additional \$1 billion annually for supplemental airport discretionary grants, with half prioritized for small airports should Congress provide such funding. The bill also extended the contract tower program.

More recently, airports have seen a \$15 billion influx of capital via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for AIP and other airport projects.

Passenger Facility Charge

While passenger traffic through airport facilities continues to grow a record pace, outdated aviation infrastructure continues to struggle to keep pace with demand. As airports work to modernize their infrastructure, it can be challenging to secure funding. Infrastructure projects at airports in the United States are funded through three key mechanisms: federal grants through the AIP, the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) local user fee, and tenant rents and fees.

The PFC has been unchanged for almost 25 years and is capped at \$4.50. Allowing for an increase will help restore the PFC's lost purchasing power and provide airports with the ability to set their own levels based on locally determined needs. Airports rely on the PFC to fund infrastructure projects and is only paid by travelers using the airport. Allowing airports to raise the PFC to \$7.50 will help spur additional airport infrastructure development and improve the service for the flying public.

POSITION: *Support* annual appropriations to match authorized amounts for the Airport Improvement Program. *Support* Monroe County's grant proposals for funding through the FAA Airport Improvement Program. *Support* federal funding for sound attenuation activities around military air facilities.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Veterans Affairs Issues

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Congress last passed significant veterans-related legislation in mid-2018, titled the VA Mission Act. The bill primarily intends to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system for the nation's veterans by consolidating and modernizing the VA's community care program, establishing an Asset and Infrastructure Review process, expanding the VA's Family Caregiver Program to pre-9/11 veterans, and increasing the VA's capacity to care for veteran patients in VA medical facilities.

The largest part of the law establishes a consolidated VA community care program referred to as the Veterans Community Care Program. Under certain circumstances, veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system can receive health care in their community rather than just from a VA facility. Furthermore, eligible veterans are authorized two visits per calendar year at participating walk-in or federally qualified health care clinics.

Monroe County Priorities

- 1) VA Mission Act - Community Care
 - a. Increase the number of non-VA health care providers in Monroe County
 - b. Mandate payment timeframes to non-VA health care providers
 - c. Prohibit billings to veterans by these medical providers
- 2) Compensation and Pension – non-VA medical provided services
 - a. Increase the number of contracted medical providers in Monroe County
 - b. Implement an evaluation survey on appointment contractor companies and contracted medical providers
- 3) Education Benefits
 - a. Require accredited Universities and Colleges to defer tuition, allowing veterans and active duty members to start attending college immediately
 - b. Allow accredited Universities and Colleges to have direct access when requesting eligibility
- 4) Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
 - a. Amend the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Act for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
 - i. Require transitioning veterans consult with an accredited veterans service officer
 - ii. Add a multi-phased "civilian life" phase for veterans and their spouses
 1. Allow veterans to re-attend TAP after separation from service
 2. Amend the Solid Start Program requiring the DVA outreach with veterans at 90 days, 6 months, then at 1, 3, and 5 years from separation providing them data on how to seek assistance services
- 5) Record Requests
 - a. Allow Veteran Service Officers direct access to archived military discharge documents, improving document request wait times and access to benefits
- 6) Concurrent Retirement Disability Pay/Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act
 - a. Amend title 10, United States Code, permitting retired servicemembers of the Armed Forces with service-connected disabilities rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent retirement disability pay and to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service
 - i. Support Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act



THORN RUN PARTNERS

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

POSITION: **Support** improvements to the VA Mission Act that will allow Monroe County veterans to fully benefit from the law. **Support** additional educational benefits for our nation's veterans to allow them to attend post-secondary schools more quickly after service concludes. **Support** improvements to the VA Transition Assistance Program that will help support veterans as they transition to civilian life, including an opportunity to reattend the program should they desire to in the future.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Oil and Gas Drilling and Oil Spill Protection

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Active energy drilling currently occurs in both the western and central Gulf of Mexico, while nearly the entire eastern Gulf is protected from drilling by Presidential memorandum until 2032. In 2020, President Trump signed a memorandum withdrawing the eastern Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coast of Florida from exploration, development, or production of energy through June, 2032.

The federal government typically develops five-year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing programs to guide energy exploration activities in federal waters. The Biden Administration will at some point develop a new five-year exploration plan. Such a plan is unlikely to include significant new drilling for any OCS areas other than maybe in the central and western Gulf of Mexico.

Congressional Action

Several bills would codify the ban on offshore energy exploration off the coast of Florida. For example, the "Preserving Recreation, Oceans, Tourism, Environment and Coastal Towns (PROTECT) in Florida Act," H.R. 5707, has the support of many Florida lawmakers, including Rep. Gimenez. Meanwhile, Sen. Marco Rubio has sponsored the "American Shores Protection Act," S. 2468, which would also mimic the Trump executive order. Rep. Waltz introduced a companion bill, H.R. 4696, in the House. Another House bipartisan bill making the moratorium permanent, H.R. 2836, sponsored by Reps. Kathy Castor and Vern Buchanan, was reintroduced in the House this Congress.

Oil Spill Protection

The Oil Pollution Act (OPA) was passed by Congress and signed into law in August 1990 in response to rising public concern following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill to expand the authority of the federal government to prevent and respond to oil spills. The OPA created the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, from which one billion dollars per spill is available for such activities as expediting payments for cleanup efforts, payment of claims for uncompensated removal costs and damages, and payments to a state or local governments for increased public services and the net loss of government revenue. The Trust Fund is primarily funded by a 9 cents per barrel tax on oil. Under OPA, holders of leases or permits for offshore facilities are liable for all cleanup costs, plus non-cleanup and containment damages up to \$133.65 million.

In addition, the Foreign Spill Protection Act, was passed into law in 2017. This amended the OPA to impose penalties and provide for the recovery of removal costs and damages in connection with discharges of oil from foreign offshore units that reach or threaten United States navigable waters. Due to Monroe County's proximity to Cuba, this legislation may provide an important resource if there are any future spills in foreign waters near Monroe's shores.

Monroe County would like to see additional changes to OPA to ensure that the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund can address Spills of National Significance where there is not a financially viable or legally responsible party, and that local governments may act as first responders during oil spill events.

POSITION: *Oppose* the potential expansion of energy exploration in Florida. *Support* revisions to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and other associated laws to ensure that local governments may act as first responders in an effort to protect local communities and be reimbursed for their actions undertaken to protect their resources and



THORN RUN PARTNERS



restore damaged areas during oil spill events, and the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund is capable of addressing Spills of National Significance where there is not a financially viable or legally responsible party.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Social Service Programs

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY:

Continuum of Care Program – Federal Homeless Assistance

In 1987, Congress passed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as a response to the increase in homelessness in the United States. It originally created several programs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that focused on combating the root causes of homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act has been amended many times, most recently in 2009 via the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The HEARTH Act updated and expanded the definition of homelessness and made changes to existing programs under McKinney-Vento and created the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program.

The CoC program provides mostly formula grant funding to local governments and non-profits. It requires communities seeking funds to develop a Continuum of Care system designed to address the critical problem of homelessness through a coordinated community-based process of identifying needs and building a system to address them.

The Monroe County Continuum of Care is the lead agency designated by HUD and the State of Florida for coordinating and planning homeless services in the Florida Keys. The CoC organizes the collaboration of local agencies, including Monroe County Social Services and the Monroe County School District, to provide critical supportive services for the homeless.

In recent years, Congress provides roughly \$3 billion annually for the CoC programs.

Aging Issues

Created in 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) supports more than 11 million senior Americans each year — particularly those who are low-income — through programs that promote nutrition (e.g. Meals on Wheels), improve transportation options, support caregivers, offer employment and community service opportunities, and prevent abuse and neglect. The law was last reauthorized in 2016.

Last Congress, the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 was passed to reauthorize programs for FY 2020 through FY 2024. It includes provisions that aim to remove barriers to the aging network increasing business acumen and capacity building, provide states and localities with the flexibility of deciding the allocation of National Family Caregiver Services between the populations served, and extends authorization of the RAISE Family Caregiver Act and the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act by one additional year.

Recent appropriations provided for the ACL have remained relatively stable at more than \$2 billion per year.

Social Services Block Grant

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Administration for Children and Families that provides funding to the states for social services for eligible populations. The program is permanently authorized under the Social Security Act.

States have broad discretion over how to utilize the funds, but SSBG is generally used to meet at least one of the following goals: 1) achieving or maintaining economic self-support; 2) achieving or maintaining personal self-



THORN RUN PARTNERS

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

sufficiency; 3) preventing or remedying neglect; 4) preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing for community-based care; and 5) securing referral or admission for institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate. Services may include daycare, protective services, services to persons with disabilities, foster care, adoption, case management, health-related services, transportation, meal delivery, or any other services found necessary by the state that meets eligible criteria.

The SSBG program has seen stable funding over the past several years, being funded at more than \$1.7 billion.

POSITION: *Support* continued adequate annual funding the Continuum of Care homeless response program, Older Americans Act programs that support programs serving elderly persons, and for the Social Services Block Grant program, all of which support critical social services to Monroe County.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Public Safety Programs

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Federal grant funding for many Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs are provided as block grants with each state receiving a certain amount of funding, generally linked to population. That funding is then passed through to local jurisdictions to help support police, fire, emergency management, and homeland security functions. Examples of these formula programs include the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG).

In other instances, funding from federal programs is made available to local governments via competitive grant solicitations. Competitive program funds can be used to hire police officers through Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) or firefighters through Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response Grants (SAFER), and purchase equipment through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). There is also another category of grants that are distributed to certain recipients based on specific criteria, such as the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which provides funds to eligible regions to help communities prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from potential attacks and other hazards.

Monroe County has benefited from several of these federal programs in the past, while other programs offer competitive grant opportunities from which the County may seek funds.

For the last several years, each of these programs have been well funded via annual appropriations bills or other funding opportunities from Congress.

POSITION: **Support** continued funding for the wide variety of DOJ and DHS grants, i.e., Community Oriented Policing Services, Byrne Justice Assistance Grants, Emergency Management Preparedness Grants, Assistance to Firefighters Grants, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants, Urban Areas Security Initiative grants, and other security-specific grants. **Support** any Monroe County applications for these funds.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Naval Air Station, Key West

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT MONROE COUNTY: Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West is located on Boca Chica Key in Monroe County, Florida, 10 miles north of the City of Key West. NAS Key West has several annexes throughout Monroe County including on Key West. The U.S. Navy's presence in Key West dates to 1823, when a Naval Base was established to stop piracy in the area.

Naval Air Station Key West's national security mission supports operational and readiness requirements for Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, National Guard units, federal agencies, and allied forces. What makes the southernmost air station attractive to the war fighter is access to unencumbered air space and sea space, the Tactical Combat Training System (TCTS), year-round great weather, the piers/harbor, the visitor quarters complex and the Gulf range complex. As such, NAS Key West is the Navy's premier East Coast transient pilot training facility for tactical aviation squadrons. The airfield hosts aviation squadrons from around the country on a regular basis to fulfill the mission.

NAS Key West encompasses more than 5,800 acres, and the Gulf water and air ranges span 134,000 square miles. Air station facilities can support up to 100 aircraft and more than 800 personnel at one time, as well as provide port operations for visiting ships. More than 30 tenant commands call Key West home.

These commands include:

- Joint Interagency Task Force South
- Coast Guard Sector Key West
- U.S. Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School
- Naval Branch Health Clinic
- VFC-111 "Sun Downers" Adversary Squadron
- VFA-106 "Gladiators" Detachment Key West
- U.S. Naval Research Lab

The air station's customers include active and Reserve fighter/strike fighter communities, Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) units, Fleet Replacement Squadrons (FRSs), Fleet Forces Command units and other military service users.

Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission

The history of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission dates to the Kennedy Administration, which began to reconfigure and consolidate military bases to better meet the threats the United States faced during the Cold War. As the Cold War began to wind down and U.S. defense needs evolved, Congress passed legislation in 1988 to create the independent Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC).

BRAC is a bipartisan group of nine individuals who are appointed by the President to analyze recommendations of the Department of Defense and make decisions regarding base closures or reorganizations. BRAC attempts to remove political considerations from the decision-making process. Congress ultimately must vote simply yes or no on BRAC's entire list of recommendations. There have been five BRAC rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995 and 2005. Since the last BRAC, discussions of future rounds have been intermittent and have failed to move forward.

While NAS Key West's unique mission and location make it an unlikely target for future elimination, the County should remain engaged to prepare for any contingency.



THORN RUN PARTNERS



POSITION: *Monitor* activities related to the Department of Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission for potential impacts to NAS Key West.