



2023 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. FISCAL YEAR 2024 COMMUNITY FUNDED PROJECT

Support Monroe County's request for \$6,297,300 from the Fiscal Year 2024 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, Department of Transportation, Airport Improvement Program account to fund the Key West International Airport Passenger Improvement Project. This project will fund additional investments to further improve the passenger experience, including structural (leaking windows and doors) and modal upgrades (methods for processing passengers through the facility).

2. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROGRAMS

Support funding for the following (Army Corps of Engineers) ACOE programs that directly impact Monroe County:

- **Monroe County, FL Project:** Monroe County is partnering with the ACOE on a suite of projects to stabilize portions of US 1, dry floodproof critical buildings, and elevate and dry floodproof residential buildings. The project was authorized for construction by Congress via the 2022 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and received \$917,000 in the Fiscal Year 2023 funding cycle to fully fund the federal costs of two years of preconstruction, engineering, and design for the US 1 stabilization (the first segment to proceed to construction). This outcome was because of the County's advocacy.
 - **Support** FY 2025 funding for construction of the US 1 revetments once the ACOE completes the PED phase.
- **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. Funding nearing \$85 million have been appropriated by Congress over the past decade and the 2022 WRDA bill also increased the overall authorization from \$100 million to \$200 million.
 - **Support** FY 2024 funding from the Energy & Water Appropriations bill to continue to fund the FKWQIP reimbursement.
- **Everglades Restoration:** Restoration efforts that bring more clean, fresh water from the Everglades south to Florida Bay significantly improves the health of Florida Bay. The seagrass beds of the Florida Bay support highly productive recreation and commercial fisheries, but are threatened by hypersalinity conditions that result from insufficient flows of fresh water. Recently, Everglades restoration has benefited from an unprecedented level of funding provided for restoration, with the federal government providing roughly \$1.8 billion over the last 3 years, with another \$400+ million scheduled for Fiscal Year 2024.
 - **Support** maintaining the Administration's request for Everglades funding in FY 2024 funding via the Energy & Water Appropriations bill.

3. SUPPORT REAUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM (NFIP) TO PROTECT AFFORDABILITY

Affordable flood insurance protects property owners, property values, local tax revenue, and economic activity. 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 protects coastal economic engines. The State of Florida is the most impacted by changes to NFIP with **nearly 1.7m of NFIP's 4.7m policies, with \$430B** in insured value.

FEMA is implementing the new **Risk Rating 2.0** pricing methodology. Rate increases are limited by law to a **maximum of 18 percent per year**, meaning that increases may be phased in over many years, unless the law is changed. Upon repeated calls from Congress and others for increased transparency relating to the implementation of RR 2.0, FEMA recently released more specific County and zip code information relating to the "risk-based cost of insurance versus the current cost of insurance" for single-family homes as of September 30, 2022.

For Monroe County, FEMA indicates:

- 12,002 single-family policies in force;
- \$1,759 average current cost of insurance;
- **\$4,622 average future risk-based cost of insurance** (among highest in the nation);
- 162.8% projected increase.

The intensity and variety of engagement from Congress has increased substantially in response to RR 2.0. However, RR 2.0 continues to be implemented and the outcry over future rate increases is far from universal. Without a full repeal of RR 2.0, Monroe County supports the following reforms:

- **Maintain focus on affordability -- lower annual increases to no more than 9% (half the current rate) for all properties;**
- Ensure rates are *consistent* for all properties, including second homes and businesses;
- Make 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 *mitigation* (up to a 6:1 return on investment).

4. DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING AND REFORM

- **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 when necessary.
 - **Support** the Natural Disaster Recovery Program Act that proposes to address all recovery needs via a FEMA block grant program to states for subaward to local entities. Funds could be used for disaster relief, resiliency, recovery, restoration of infrastructure and housing, mitigation, and economic revitalization as states and locals see fit. This would replace all disaster programs that currently operate independently.
- **Support** changes to the NRCS EWP program or develop new authorities for FEMA to remove all debris in nearshore marine environments to respond to future disasters in the Florida Keys.
 - The NRCS EWP program has been invaluable to Monroe County. However, it only partially solved the problem with canal debris and sediment challenges after Irma. 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.
- **Support** the FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act, legislation that would require FEMA to reimburse local governments for interest payments on disaster-related loans, something that would have saved Monroe County \$1,653,394 in interest and other debt service costs in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.
- **Support** permanent authorization of the CDBG-DR program so HUD does not have to create a new program every time Congress funds recovery activities, thereby shortening the time for locals to receive funds.
 - **Support** the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act that would create a disaster recovery fund at HUD to replace the CDBG-DR program, make the program permanent, and support more efficient recovery.

5. SUPPORT CRITICAL FEDERAL FUNDING FOR MONROE COUNTY

With the need to increase the debt limit, recent debate has focused on pairing such an increase with potentially significant spending cuts, primarily to non-defense discretionary accounts. While the exact impact of such cuts will not be known until they are agreed to and implemented during consideration of the various annual appropriations bills that fund federal agencies and programs, some have estimated that cuts could reach 30 percent from prior year spending levels. Given the likelihood that cuts will not be equal among all programs, the impacts could be more severe for some. Following are programs Monroe County depends on that may be subject to cuts:

- **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.
- **OLDER AMERICANS ACT** programs that support critical social service programs serving elder persons.
- **SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT** program.
- **CONTINUUM OF CARE** program to support our local homeless assistance initiatives.
- **LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS:** Support the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act that would increase the LIHTC allocated to states, reinstating a 12.5% increase that was made in 2018 but expired in 2021.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE, RESILIENCE INVESTMENTS, AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Monitor** implementation of year two of five of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, from which the County has benefited. For example, the Key West International Airport has received additional formula funding and been able to compete for additional competitive awards due to the passage of the bill. Likewise, Monroe County Transit has also sought competitive funding from programs made available or expanded by the bill. The County may seek additional competitive grant funding from the legislation as opportunities become available for things like bridges, electrical charging infrastructure, or to improve the resilience of County roads, for example.
- **Support** all opportunities to secure funding for the County's infrastructure priorities, including Monroe County Transit and the Key West International Airport, among other initiatives.
- **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.
- **Support** the passage of a Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, including continuation of a stable and robust funding level for the Airport Improvement Program, which benefits Key West International Airport as well as the other airports in the County.
- **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.

7. VETERANS AFFAIRS ISSUES

Veterans' programs could also be subject to funding reductions due to the debt ceiling debate and outcome. While some argue these programs will not be reduced, limiting large swaths of the federal budget from spending cuts (like Veterans programs and the Defense budget, which some argue should be increased significantly) means even larger cuts for the remaining programs.

- **Support** H.R. 984 and S. 106, the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act to authorize federal funding to expand the work of County Veterans Service Officers.
- **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.

8. 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.

9. NAVAL AIR STATION KEY WEST

Monitor activities related to Naval Air Station, Key West. **Support** Department of Defense investments to ensure the continued robust presence of the Naval Air Station.

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