

2025



# MONROE COUNTY STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mayor James K. Scholl, District 3

Mayor *Pro Tem* Michelle Lincoln, District 2

Commissioner Craig Cates, District 1

Commissioner David Rice, District 4

Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein, District 5

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

DECEMBER 2024

**MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**Mayor Jim Scholl, District 3**

**Mayor Pro Tem Michelle Lincoln, District 2**

**Commissioner Craig Cates, District 1**

**Commissioner David Rice, District 4**

**Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein, District 5**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

**County Administrator Christine Hurley**

**LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS**

**House District 120: Representative Jim Mooney**

**Senate District 39: Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez**

**MEMBERSHIPS IN LEGISLATIVE ALLIANCES**

**Florida Association of Counties**

**Small County Coalition**

**Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact**

**South Florida Regional Planning Association**

**National Association of Counties**

**Gulf States Counties and Parishes Caucus**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** (Process, Summary of Priorities, Lobbying Team, Key Dates): ..... 3

**STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES** (Discussion and Background):

Stewardship, LATF, Water Quality..... 6  
Land Acquisition..... 7  
Affordable Housing ..... 8  
Resilience..... 8  
Wind and Flood Insurance..... 9  
Workforce/Affordable Housing..... 10  
Vacation Rentals..... 12  
Comprehensive Plan/ROGO Protections..... 13  
Marine Protection ..... 13  
Occupational Licensing..... 16  
Transportation..... 17  
Preemption and Home Rule ..... 18

**GENERAL STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES:**

Growth Management / Environment..... 19  
Emergency Management..... 20  
Health, Mental Health, and Social Services..... 20  
Veterans..... 21  
Clerks' Funding/Judgeships..... 21  
Florida Retirement System..... 21  
Libraries..... 21  
County Jails, Juvenile Justice..... 22  
Homelessness ..... 22

**CONTACT INFORMATION** ..... 23

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### LEGISLATIVE AGENDA DEVELOPMENT

Staff requests Board approval of the proposed items to be included in the County's 2025 State Legislative Program. Once approved, staff and the County's contract lobbying teams will pursue all Board-approved legislative items, prioritizing those that the Board designates as high-priority for 2025.

Each year, the Board reviews and approves key legislative priorities to guide the County's lobbying efforts at both the state and federal levels. Generally, the County focuses on its most urgent issues while supporting the broader initiatives of the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) and the Small County Coalition (SCC). As a member of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact, Monroe County also collaborates on the Compact's annual legislative agenda.

The BOCC and staff assess current trends and issues impacting County programs and services to identify both policy and legislative needs. Included here are the specific priorities and general issues to be pursued and supported in the 2025 State Legislative session.

### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OUTLINE

Monroe County's legislative efforts are both incremental and responsive, targeting longstanding issues such as funding for water quality infrastructure, land acquisition, and the affordability of Citizens wind insurance, as well as new challenges arising from recent legislation and evolving needs. The County's 2025 legislative priorities are outlined below:

- **Future Development in the Florida Keys/ROGO:** Monroe County is currently evaluating a request for additional permit allocations. Given the Florida Keys' designation as an Area of Critical State Concern (ACSC), Monroe County will continue to partner closely with Florida Commerce (formerly Department of Economic Opportunity), the State's ACSC oversight agency on these matters.
  - **Administrative Request:** The Board of County Commissioners is currently seeking 200 additional permits remaining within the 24-hr evacuation window. After consultation with Florida Commerce, this will be done via comprehensive plan amendment.
  - **Potential Legislation:** The Board of County Commissioners supports legislation to increase the hurricane evacuation time from 24 to up to 26 hours allowing for a maximum of 3,550 additional residential allocations, Keys-wide, to be distributed over a 40-year time frame; with the majority of those to be granted to vacant buildable lots (in order to address takings threats), and 70% of those be dedicated for workforce housing. We intend to pursue a new category of workforce housing to include a requirement that these homes be for households that earn their incomes in Monroe County, thereby ensuring that these homes will be occupied by full time residents, and not used for more vacation rental use.
- **Water Quality Project Funding:** Secure a \$20 million appropriation under the Florida Keys Stewardship Act to fund critical water quality initiatives, including the County's canal restoration program. Starting this year, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will oversee the distribution of these funds through a merit-based process. Local Keys governments can submit applications through a dedicated DEP portal for water quality project funding.
- **Land Acquisition Funding:**

- Support a \$5 million set-aside in Florida Forever funding, authorized under the Florida Keys Stewardship Act, to enable the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to acquire land in the Florida Keys, helping to protect sensitive lands and private property rights.
- Pursue legislation to extend the authorization of this set-aside, which is due to expire in 2026.
- **Inclusion in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund:** Advocate for the inclusion of the Florida Keys Stewardship Act within the State’s Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF). Funded by documentary stamp taxes via Amendment 1, the LATF supports critical state environmental priorities, such as Everglades and springs restoration. Adding the Stewardship Act to the LATF would elevate its importance and help secure annual funding.
- **Affordable Wind Insurance:** Work to keep wind insurance affordable for County residents, most of whom rely on Citizens Property Insurance Company, the state’s “insurer of last resort.” We will advocate with Citizens, state legislators, and the Office of Insurance Regulation to reinstate the 10% cap on annual premium increases, prevent the transfer of policies to higher-cost private companies, and ensure broad policyholder eligibility. In response to recent state mandates requiring Citizens’ policyholders to carry flood insurance, even for low-risk homes, we will also address the rising costs linked to FEMA’s Risk Rating 2.0, which is increasing flood insurance premiums.
- **Marine Safety:** Continue efforts to reduce vessel dereliction and enhance boater safety:
  - **New moorings:** Secure state funding for new mooring fields. Last year’s legislative appropriation supported the design and engineering of 140 moorings near Wisteria Island and Boca Chica; this year, we will seek state funding to build a shore-side facility for Boca Chica’s mooring field. (These new moorings are a requirement to enact the 90-day anchoring regulation.)
  - **Migrant vessel removals:** Secure legislation to clearly define and classify migrant vessels, allowing for their immediate removal and destruction to prevent further environmental damage.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Support measures to expand local affordable housing options, including:
  - **Construction performance bonds exemption:** Secure legislation to enable Habitat for Humanity to forgo construction performance bonds for new affordable housing development on 99-year leased County properties, to lower affordable housing construction costs.
  - **Ad Valorem Tax Relief:** Secure legislation to authorize local governments to grant ad valorem tax relief on privately owned residential properties that are voluntarily rented at affordable rates, to incentivize long-term rentals over short-term or vacant properties.
- **Local Occupational Licensing:** Continue to advocate for repeal of the State’s 2021 local occupational licensing preemption, which limits local licensing for contractors and tradespeople. During the 2023 session, Monroe County achieved a partial exemption. We will seek a full exemption for Monroe County and work with FAC and other counties to press for either repeal or significant amendment of the preemption.
- **Funding for Road Elevation Projects:** Continue to advocate for the funding of Monroe’s road elevation projects submitted to the State’s Resilient Florida Grant Program and support robust funding of this program for future projects. With the program’s 50% match requirement posing a challenge, we will work to secure grant funding and advocate for a reduced match.
- **Home Rule and Local Authority:** Oppose state preemptions that limit local government authority. The County will monitor and resist efforts that could override its comprehensive plan and preemptions affecting land development and environmental protection. Monroe supports efforts to roll back

current preemptions such as those on vacation rentals, contractor licensing, business operations, single use plastic bags, and local referenda requirements.

These priorities reflect Monroe County’s commitment to sustaining local growth responsibly, protecting natural resources, supporting affordable living, and safeguarding home rule authority.

## LOBBYING TEAM

The County uses contract lobbying services at the State level to advance Monroe County’s legislative goals and secure critical appropriations. Currently, Monroe County contracts with:

- Robert Reyes of Capital Group
- Frank Bernardino and Edgar Fernandez of Anfield Consulting
- Dean Cannon, Ryan Matthews, and Angela Drzewiecki of Gray Robinson
- Nick Iarossi and Andrew Ketchal of Capital City Consulting
- Noah Valenstein of Brightwater Strategies Group

These firms maintain a daily presence in Tallahassee and actively advocate for the County’s legislative priorities. County staff works closely with the State lobbying team, communicating regularly on session activities, legislation, policy, regulatory, and budget matters. During the session, the team conducts weekly conference calls and tracks key issues and assignments, provides monthly reports and formally reports to the Board of County Commissioners post-session.

## KEY LEGISLATIVE DATES

2025 Legislative Session Dates:

- November: Swearing in of new legislative leadership, incoming House Speaker Danny Perez, and incoming Senate President Albritton.
- December 2: First committee week for House
- December 9: First committee week for Senate
- December 11: Approval of Monroe County’s Legislative Agenda
- December/January TBD: Local Delegation Meeting
- January 13-17, 21-24, Feb 3-7, 10-14, 17-21: Committee Weeks for both House and Senate
- March 4: First Day of Regular Session and Bill Filing Deadline
- March 13: Keys Day
- March 19: FAC Legislative Day
- April 22: Last day for scheduled committee meetings
- May 2: Last Day of Regular Session

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE FLORIDA KEYS

#### CHALLENGES/BACKGROUND:

- **Area of Critical State Concern:** The State of Florida designated the Florida Keys an Area of Critical State Concern, in recognition of its unique and significant environmental resources, and through the Administration Commission, the State maintains oversight of the growth and development issues in the Florida Keys.
- **Hurricane Evacuation and Development Permits:** To date, state law has limited residential housing growth in the Keys so that permanent residents can be safely evacuated within 24 hours. The State accomplishes this through a limit and annual rationing of building permits. The number of allocations available, as determined by the State, is adopted in the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan as well as the comprehensive plans of cities of Key West, Marathon Islamorada, and Layton.
- **State Modeling:** Every 10 years, the State's land planning agency conducts new hurricane evacuation modeling. The hurricane evacuation modeling is based on a Florida Statute requiring that Monroe County residents be able to evacuate the Florida Keys within 24 hours before a storm.

The Florida Department of Commerce (formerly Department of Economic Opportunity) issued its December 2023 Florida Keys Hurricane Evacuation Modeling Report which outlined the results of various allocation scenarios ranging from no new permits to a release of 7,954 new permits, and the impacts of those scenarios to the 24-hr evacuation time frame. The upper limit of 7,954 permits is based on the report's identification of 7,954 total privately owned vacant properties throughout unincorporated and municipal Monroe County that may theoretically require permits to fend off a takings cases.

- **County consideration of new allocations:** The County determined it was necessary to take a closer look at those 7,954 parcels to determine the extent of the potential liability. To arrive at a more accurate number of parcels for which there might be liability if not assigned a permit, the Monroe County Planning Department conducted extensive analysis of those 7,954 parcels to estimate the number of parcels where development is already restricted by the presence of protected habitat and/or current zoning density requirements.

Monroe County hosted many workshops, meetings, town halls, and 5 public surveys throughout the past year to solicit constituent input and gauge public opinion on the number of new allocations Monroe County would ask from the State of Florida and an issuance rate over the next 10 or 20 years that does not lead to unbalanced growth or additional takings liability.

At its December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution supporting legislation to increase the hurricane evacuation time from 24 to up to 26 hours allowing for a maximum of 3,550 additional residential allocations, Keys-wide, to be distributed over a 40-year time frame; with the majority of those to be granted to vacant buildable lots (in order to address takings threats), and 70% of those be dedicated for workforce housing. The Board also directed staff to pursue a new category of workforce housing to include a requirement that these homes be for households that earn their incomes in Monroe County, thereby ensuring that these homes will be occupied by full time residents, and not used for more vacation rental use.

#### **REQUESTED ACTION:**

Support legislation to increase the hurricane evacuation time from 24 to up to 26 hours allowing for a maximum of 3,550 additional residential allocations, Keys-wide, to be distributed over a 40-year time frame.

## WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

### CHALLENGES:

- **Unique Ecosystem:** The Florida Keys are within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, home to one of the world’s most unique marine ecosystems. This area hosts the only living coral reef in the continental U.S. (the third-largest barrier reef globally), the hemisphere’s largest seagrass meadow, and over 6,000 species of marine life. However, cesspits, runoff, and degraded canal waters threaten this fragile ecosystem by polluting the Sanctuary’s nearshore waters.
- **Economic Impact:** The Florida Keys’ marine ecosystem is essential to the region’s tourism and fisheries economy, generating \$7B billion in gross sales and over \$383 million in state sales tax revenue (FY 2023). This robust economy relies on the continued protection of its unmatched marine environment.
- **Water Quality Mandates:** The Florida Keys are governed by strict water quality standards through the Federal Water Quality Protection Program. Established when Congress designated the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in 1990, this program mandates advanced wastewater treatment, stormwater management, and canal restoration to protect surrounding waters.
- **Wastewater Infrastructure:** As part of the Critical Concern designation, Florida mandated that the Keys implement a centralized wastewater treatment system per FS 381 and 403 standards. This massive project, spanning over 100 miles of islands, cost local governments \$900 million, with approximately \$100 million contributed by the State. Wastewater improvements are complete.
- **Florida Keys Stewardship Act:** Enacted in 2016, the Act recognizes the importance of protecting the Florida Keys' marine environment, including the coral reef and surrounding waters. It authorizes State funding for ongoing water quality restoration initiatives, namely canal restoration, with \$100 million secured to date for Keys’ restoration efforts. Including the Stewardship Act in the State’s Land Acquisition Trust Fund would secure ongoing funding for local water quality restoration projects.
- **Canal Restoration Program:** Canal water quality restoration is essential to preserve the marine ecosystem, as runoff and poor-quality canal waters seep into the Sanctuary. Testing shows that most canals in the Keys have substandard water quality; Monroe County identified 96 poor water canals. Recognizing the importance of canal restoration, the State included it as a requirement in Monroe County’s annual ACSC work plan. With total restoration costs estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars, State Stewardship Act funding is critical to this effort.
  - **Progress and local commitment to date:** The County has restored or is currently restoring 29 canals, thanks in large part to state funding per the Florida Keys Stewardship Act. The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners also allocated \$7 million in local funds to develop the Canal Restoration Master Plan and to conduct a Pilot Program testing various restoration technologies. The County dedicated its full \$20 million in RESTORE Act funds to canal restoration. In 2018, the County secured a \$45 million federal grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to clear hurricane debris from nearly 200 canals.

### REQUESTED ACTIONS:

- ✓ **SUPPORT** a \$20 million appropriation for projects under the Florida Keys Stewardship Act.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** the inclusion of the Florida Keys Stewardship Act in the State’s Land and Water Trust Fund to ensure reliable annual funding.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** the creation of a recurring five-year water-related work plan (modeled after the FDOT’s five-year work plan) to guide State funding for local water infrastructure projects and increase available State funding for these initiatives.

## LAND ACQUISITION

### CHALLENGES:

- **The Need for Land Acquisition:** The State of Florida designated the Florida Keys an Area of Critical State Concern, in recognition of its unique and significant environmental resources, and through the Administration Commission, the State maintains oversight of the growth and development issues in the Florida Keys. The State of Florida and Monroe County must be mindful about the impacts and consequences of protecting both environmentally sensitive lands while balancing private property rights.

Although potential changes are being considered to both evacuation and development limits, current state law limits residential housing growth in the Keys so that permanent residents can be safely evacuated within 24 hours. The State limits development through an annual rationing of building permits, but full allocation of permits will not be enough for all the undeveloped privately owned parcels to secure permits. The deficit of permits potentially triggers property rights lawsuits against the local governments and the State from owners who may have been denied the ability to build a home on their property. The County and the State have been named as co-defendants in property rights suits filed because of ACSC regulations, and jointly defended those suits.

Acquisition of these parcels mitigates future potential liability and promotes conservation. To this end, the Monroe County commission secured state support, which is complemented with local funds, to implement an ongoing aggressive land acquisition program.

- **Keys' Florida Forever Set-Aside:** The State's Florida Forever program provides a programmatic funding source through which the State can acquire land to protect environmentally sensitive lands that are within the Florida Forever project boundaries. Because many of the County's current privately-owned, undeveloped properties lie within the Florida Forever project boundaries, Florida Forever-funded acquisitions can address the mission of land conservation while also retiring development rights.

The Florida Keys Stewardship Act authorized, and the Legislature annually provides a \$5M set-aside of Florida Forever funding, dedicated specifically to enabling FDEP to maintain an aggressive land acquisition program in the Florida Keys. This set-aside expires in 2026-2027.

- **Progress and local commitment to date:** Since July 1, 2016, through September 30, 2024, Monroe County (the Board of County Commissioners and the Land Authority) has expended a total of \$40.6 M in local funds to reduce potential liability by acquiring land and retiring the development rights. The County has an additional \$20.1 M budgeted for fiscal year 2025. DEP has expended \$11.4 M and Florida Commerce f/k/a DEO has expended \$12.4 M. During this period, 556 development rights have been retired (372 by the County, 162 by DEP, and 22 by Florida Commerce f/k/a DEO).

Also, beginning in 2022, the Land Authority worked with the FDEP to allow the Land Authority to pre-acquire lands within Florida Forever and then resell the parcels to the State of Florida. Since this effort began, pre-acquired lands valued at \$6.2M have been resold to the State. The goal is for the Land Authority to annually sell land valued at \$5M to FDEP.

- **Non-conservation and military base buffering lands:** In 2018, the County secured legislative changes that authorize the State to acquire non-conservation lands in ACSC for the purposes of retiring development rights. However, this type of acquisition requires a state funding source. Additionally, there are hundreds of privately-owned, undeveloped parcels that lie within the military buffer areas of the Naval Air Station Key West. In 2018, we secured legislative changes that prioritized NASKW within the State's military buffer lands program, but the program requires greater State funding to acquire more base buffer land.

- **Voluntary Home Buyout Program (VHBP):** This is another program that assists in land acquisition. Run by Florida Commerce (f/k/a Department of Economic Opportunity), this program is designed to help reduce the impact of future disasters in high-risk flood areas. Monroe County was allocated \$15M which it is using to purchase the property and home of voluntary sellers who were impacted by Hurricane Irma. After buyout, the homes are demolished and the land is preserved in perpetuity for open space (or, when deemed necessary the land may be used for recreational or stormwater purposes).
  - **Progress to date:** In total, 87 VHBP applications were received and 21 of those were eligible applicants who sold their parcels to the County through VHBP closings. The acquisitions expended just over \$12.4 million of the \$15 million grant with the remaining monies being used for surveys, appraisals, demolition, environmental reviews, title reviews, and grant administration. The 21 transactions have retired 22 development rights (21 market rate ROGO Exemptions and 1 Transferrable Development Right).

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** appropriation of \$5M within Florida Forever as authorized in The Florida Keys Stewardship Act for land acquisition within the Florida Keys that will both conserve environmentally sensitive land and retire development rights to mitigate future takings liability.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation to extend the authorization of this set-aside, which is due to expire in 2026.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued partnership with FDEP and Florida Commerce to fund and implement an aggressive, long-term land acquisition strategy aimed at reducing the total inventory of privately owned vacant land to curtail the threat of significant future takings liability.

**ENHANCING MONROE COUNTY’S FLOODING RESILIENCE**

**CHALLENGES:**

- **Severe and persistent road flooding** is impacting many communities affecting public safety, commerce, property values and quality of life.
- **Estimated Costs:** In 2018, Monroe County embarked on a comprehensive study to examine the impacts of sea level rise, King Tides, and storm inundation on the County’s Road system. This study, completed in 2021, produced initial **cost estimates of \$1.8B to elevate roads and otherwise mitigate flooding** impacts. (This estimate does not include roadways within the Keys’ municipalities.)
- **Funding:** The County continues to pursue all available funding streams to assist with this comprehensive effort, including federal and state grants, Congressional appropriations, special assessments, and local funding.
- **State Resilient Florida Grant Program:** The County has already secured significant funding thru the new Resilient Florida (“RF”) Grant Program, created by the Legislature in 2020 to allow local governments to apply for grants to address resilience needs. However, the **50% required match** will limit the County’s ability to continue to secure funds through this program if we cannot also secure match sources.
- **Army Corp of Engineers Coastal Resilience Program:** Monroe County’s residential communities and privately owned housing stock also require resilience investment. In partnership with Monroe County, the Army Corp of Engineers conducted a study of the Florida Keys and within unincorporated Monroe County alone there are over 1,800 residential structures at risk for flooding and

recommended for elevation. This \$1.8B Florida **Keys Coastal Resilience program** was Congressionally authorized in 2022. The authorization allows for future Congressional appropriations to the Army Corp for flood mitigation to homes, businesses, and US 1 in the Florida Keys. Monroe also secured a **\$5M federal appropriation** for resilience.

- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program:** The County secured \$180M in funding through the federal-state Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), enabling us to fund and to match state funding for our road elevation projects. Programs like this are vital to the changing climate and risks associated with flooding related to storms and sea level rise; they also require significant staff expertise and time.
- In 2022, the County secured an expansion of powers and responsibilities of the **Monroe County Land Authority to enable it to assist the County in activities related to enhancing residential resiliency** to flooding and sea level rise, including seeking and administering grants to the County to elevate/rebuild/buyout flood-vulnerable homes.

#### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** funding for projects submitted to DEP through the Resilient Florida grant program for road elevation/flood mitigation projects.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued robust State investment in local resilience efforts, including full funding for the Statewide Resilient Florida Grant program.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** an elimination or reduction in the match requirement.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** funding for projects submitted to DEM through FEMA-funded HMGP and FMA grant programs for residential home elevations, buyouts and demolition/rebuild.

## **WIND INSURANCE AND FLOOD INSURANCE**

#### **CHALLENGES:**

- **Importance of wind insurance and Citizens Property Insurance Company (“Citizens”):** Most wind policies in Monroe are with state-backed Citizens, the “insurer of last resort” due to the limited availability of coverage options in our high-risk area. To preserve affordable wind insurance, it is essential to advocate to Citizens, the Office of Insurance Regulation, and legislators to oppose efforts to increase premiums, remove the cap on annual rate increases, reduce coverage, or eliminate eligibility.
- **Statewide Issues:** As the “insurer of last resort,” Citizens Property Insurance has been increasingly taking on policies statewide, as private insurance companies have either dropped coverage, exited the state, or gone insolvent. Many policyholders have also turned to Citizens due to skyrocketing private insurance costs. As the number of policies in Citizens grows, the Legislature has pressured the company to raise its rates and reduce its policy count. Citizens is often criticized for being unfair competition to private insurers because its rates are more affordable. Recent legislation has increased the cap on allowable annual rate hikes for Citizens and allowed private insurers to “take out” policies from Citizens by selectively choosing policyholders, often at higher, uncapped rates. Additionally, the Legislature has provided substantial financial support to private insurers to strengthen the private market, without requiring them to control their rates.
- **Monroe County Specific Concerns:**
  - **Wind insurance rates:** Monroe’s residential and commercial Citizens’ wind insurance rates are the highest in the State. Monroe’s premium rate 175% higher than the median coastal rate. High costs and limited coverage negatively affect our citizens, our workforce, our property values, and our economy.

- **Monroe’s building standards:** Monroe County’s building standards are among the most rigorous in the State, yet this is not reflected in Citizens’ rate calculations for Monroe.
- **Premiums vs. Claims:** Premiums charged by Citizens are not commensurate with actual risk. From 2004-present Monroe paid in total more than a half billion dollars in premiums over claims.
- **Affordability and Annual Glide path:** Monroe’s already high rates are compounded with annual increases allowed even with the cap. These costs exacerbate the County’s housing cost crisis. Property insurance affordability is a key component in preserving the Keys’ strong local economy. The legislature recognized the importance of affordable property insurance, but Citizens has failed to apply an “affordability” definition or standard.

Citizens Property Insurance Corporation statute reads: ***“The absence of affordable property insurance threatens the public health, safety, and welfare and likewise threatens the economic health of the State. The State therefore has a compelling public interest and a public purpose to assist in assuring that property in the State is insured and that it is insured at affordable rates so as to facilitate the remediation, reconstruction, and replacement of damaged or destroyed property in order to reduce or avoid the negative effects otherwise resulting to the public health, safety, and welfare, to the economy of the State, and to the revenues of the State and local governments which are needed to provide for the public welfare.”***

- During the 2021 Legislative session, lawmakers **increased the long standing 10% annual rate cap** in Citizens’ premiums by 1% each year for the next 5 years. Citizens and lawmakers continue to discuss raising Citizens’ rates and eliminating the rate cap altogether.
- During the 2023 Special Session, the Legislature implemented **new flood insurance requirements** for Citizens’ policy holders, namely that they carry flood insurance (even if they are not at risk of flood), and that the new flood insurance policies be identical to their Citizens’ policies.
- These new mandates exacerbate the effects of FEMA’s Risk Rating 2.0, which has significantly raised flood insurance premiums. As a result, Citizens policyholders are now facing record-high costs for both wind and flood insurance. During the 2024 legislative session, Monroe County worked to reduce these requirements and achieved partial success: we were able to eliminate the mandate that policy coverage must be identical.

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that restores the 10% rate cap for Monroe County, recognizing Monroe’s unique housing affordability issues and strong building codes.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that increases Citizens’ coverage cap to \$1.5M.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that rolls back requirement for flood insurance for Citizens’ insureds that are not in the flood zone.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation to help lower premiums and annual rate increases by requiring Citizens to:
  - Apply mitigation credits that account for Monroe’s rigorous building standards.
  - Apply an affordability definition or standard, per the statutory language mandating affordability.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** legislation that limits the availability of Citizens’ coverage (particularly in areas such as Monroe, where there is no reasonable degree of competition for windstorm insurance.)
- ✓ **SUPPORT** the legislative efforts of Fair Insurance Rates for Monroe (FIRM) related to both wind and flood insurance affordability and availability for Monroe County.

## WORKFORCE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**CHALLENGE:** In the Florida Keys, our unique development restrictions, lack of available land, and the expense of construction significantly add to the cost of workforce housing development.

Affordable housing is a complex issue that impacts most coastal communities in the state of Florida. It is a particularly acute challenge in Monroe County due to high land values combined with land that is limited by significant environmental protections and supply that is limited by our Rate of Growth Ordinance permit restrictions. Dramatically higher purchase and rental costs make it increasingly more difficult for private and public sector employers to recruit and retain employees.

Meeting the affordable housing challenge requires myriad strategies: funding sources, incentives, and policies. ***Statewide, broader state policies that control property insurance costs and limit the proliferation of short-term rentals are strongly supported by the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners.*** State policies that include creative strategies like steering affordable housing development to commercial areas and robust state funding are encouraging

State funding is critical to local efforts. The State's Florida Housing Finance Corporation's awards of Tax Credits and SAIL funding, as well other State funding and incentives for preserving and developing new workforce/affordable housing are critical to local affordable housing development efforts. The County also receives approximately \$800,000 per year in SHIP funding, which we use to help income eligible families move into homeownership.

Locally, Monroe County and the Monroe County Land Authority purchase land, provide funding, and continue to develop new incentives to promote the development of affordable housing.

Monroe has identified several additional measures that will help local efforts that require legislative authorization:

- **Construction performance bonds exemption:** Secure legislation to enable Habitat for Humanity to forgo construction performance bonds for new affordable housing development on 99-year leased County properties, to lower affordable housing construction costs.
- **Ad Valorem tax relief:** To incentivize long-term rental housing over short-term/vacation rental, or vacancy, we would seek authority to grant ad valorem tax relief to privately-owned residential properties that voluntarily rent affordably.

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** an exemption for Habitat for Humanity to purchase construction performance bonds for new affordable housing that is constructed on county-owned properties that are leased in perpetuity to Habitat for Humanity.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that would authorize local governments to adopt ordinances to grant ad valorem tax relief to residential properties voluntarily used for the public purpose of providing affordable/workforce rental housing.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** statewide policies that control property insurance costs and limit the proliferation of short-term rentals to bolster housing affordability.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** award of Tax Credits to Monroe County, and protection of the Florida Keys set-aside.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** award of SAIL funding to Monroe County.
- ✓ **MONITOR** state legislation related to affordable housing development to ensure that Monroe County's comprehensive plan regulations, including our Rate of Growth Ordinance regulations are not superseded.

## VACATION RENTAL IMPACTS ON WORKFORCE HOUSING

**CHALLENGE:** Vacation rentals exacerbate Monroe County’s affordable housing crisis by depleting the County’s already limited rental housing stock for its workforce and driving up rental prices.

In the Florida Keys residential development – both market rate and affordable – is severely restricted. With only a single transportation egress, and to ensure a 24-hour evacuation time prior to a major storm event, the number of building permits allowed for Monroe County is limited by the State.

As we cannot build new housing units in numbers sufficient to meet our needs, the proliferation of short-term vacation rentals has a particularly severe impact. With each new vacation rental, we lose an existing, irreplaceable housing unit once available for long-term workforce rental housing.

To maintain our workforce, which is critical to our tourism-based local economy, Monroe County must be able to protect its rental housing stock and limit its conversion/loss to vacation rentals.

Monroe County has some regulatory authority that has been “grandfathered”, but it is not sufficient to contain the conversion of housing units to short-term rentals.

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that provides a “carve out” for Monroe County from preemptive vacation rental regulations via the County’s status as an Area of Critical State Concern to enable the County to amend/update our vacation rental regulations to preserve/increase supply of workforce housing.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that protects Monroe County’s grandfathered vacation rental ordinance and that would allow local governments with grandfathered ordinances to amend and update their regulations without losing their grandfathered status.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that enhances Monroe County’s ability to enforce local vacation rental regulations, including allowing for higher penalties for violations.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that restores authority to local communities for the regulation of vacation rentals, as necessary for quality of life, public safety and preservation of a traditional residential communities and accessible and affordable permanent and long-term rental housing stock.

## PROTECTING ROGO FROM LAND USE/ DEVELOPMENT PREEMPTIONS

**Challenge:** Recent State legislation seeks to advance agricultural development and affordable housing development via preemptions and incentives. Monroe County seeks to ensure that these types of legislative efforts do not override our local comprehensive plan and Rate of Growth Ordinance regulations.

Recent agriculture-related legislation preempts local governments from adopting any ordinance, regulation, rule, or policy to prohibit, restrict, regulate, or otherwise limit an activity of a bona fide farm operation or limits an agritourism activity on land classified as agricultural land where such activity is regulated through implemented best management practices or interim measures developed by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or water management districts as part of a statewide or regional program.

As such, this law allows for a property that is classified as agricultural to be exempted from building regulations, allowing for the construction of structures/uses if they are non-residential, and further allowing for the clearing protected hammock; for example, erecting barns to be used as wedding venues.

Additionally, new State laws seek to aggressively incentivize the development of affordable housing. While we support such efforts, it is critical that these efforts do not override local comprehensive plan regulations, including specifically, Monroe’s Rate of Growth Ordinance regulations.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation to exempt Areas of Critical State Concern from legislative development preemptions, or to clarify that the use/structure on any private property is not exempt from state and federal environmental regulations.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that ensures that legislative efforts to incentivize the development of affordable housing do not override Monroe County’s ROGO ordinance requirements.

**MARINE PROTECTION:  
MOORING FIELD DEVELOPMENT, MIGRANT VESSELS, AND PUMP-OUT PROGRAM**

**CHALLENGE: Balancing Marine Conservation with a thriving boating community.**

Preserving the health of Monroe County's marine environment is critical not only to the region's economy but also to its cultural heritage. As home to a vibrant boating community – including recreational boaters, commercial and charter fishing operations, and live-aboard residents – Monroe County faces the challenge of managing the impact that high levels of boat traffic have on its waters.

Unfortunately, the large number of boaters that visit and live on our waters has contributed to a rise in derelict vessels. Monroe County has the highest number of derelict vessels in the State. The Florida Legislature and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) have both recognized the threat these abandoned boats pose to navigation and the environment, as well as the unnecessary financial burden their removal places on taxpayers.

Monroe County supports regulations such as anchoring limits and the development of mooring fields to reduce vessel dereliction and abandonment. Additionally, ensuring compliance with No Discharge Zone regulations is an ongoing priority, supported by the provision of a free vessel pump out service to maintain water quality.

**1) Mooring Fields: A Key Strategy for Promoting Responsible Anchoring and Preventing Derelict Vessels**

Mooring fields play a crucial role in encouraging responsible anchoring practices and reducing the risks associated with abandoned vessels, which can be dangerous and costly to manage. To promote responsible anchoring, Monroe County has initiated the development of additional mooring fields.

Derelict vessels often result from long-term anchorage, where boats left in one spot deteriorate, becoming “at-risk” or ultimately “derelict.” By establishing anchoring limits, which restrict the number of days a vessel can remain anchored in the same location, vessel owners are encouraged to maintain their boats in operable condition, reducing dereliction.

Many long-term anchored vessels near Key West and throughout the Keys are stored vessels, often left to avoid high dock fees or disposal costs. These stored boats contribute significantly to the derelict vessel problem.

In 2021, the Florida Legislature introduced a 90-day anchoring limit in Monroe County waters, but also required 300 new mooring balls near Key West before enforcement could begin, which proved challenging. In 2022, the requirement was reduced to 100, allowing Monroe County to proceed.

With a feasibility study completed and a \$1.6 million legislative appropriation, Monroe County has begun the design, permitting, and installation of a 100-mooring field near Wisteria Island (Man of War Harbor Mooring Field) and a 40-mooring field near Stock Island (Boca Chica Mooring Field).

However, an additional \$3.9 million is needed to complete shoreside facilities required by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the Boca Chica Mooring Field. A designated waterfront property on Maloney Avenue, Stock Island is reserved for this facility, and an engineering firm is now developing plans.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** further legislative appropriation to fund the development of shoreside facility for Boca Chica Mooring Field, as required by state regulations.

**2) Environmental Impact of Migrant Vessels**

Monroe County experiences the highest number of migrant vessel landings in Florida. State assistance with removal of migrant vessels has been critical.

Migrants often use unregistered, undocumented, and often rudimentary homemade vessels in attempts to enter the United States through Monroe County waters. These vessels pose serious threats to navigational safety and the environment, frequently containing debris, human waste, and hazardous fuel or oil containers. Streamlining the removal process for these vessels is a pressing need to mitigate their environmental impact.

Before the issuance of Mass Migration Executive Order 23-03, Monroe County's Marine Resources Office collaborated with FWC and other law enforcement agencies to manage migrant vessels. As these vessels are currently legally classified as such in Florida Statute 823.11, they are subject to the standard derelict vessel investigation process, which required a 21-day posting period under F.S. 705.103(2)(b), before the county could take action. However, these vessels - often homemade and structurally weak - deteriorate rapidly, breaking down into small fragments that pollute the marine environment before that 21-day period. Many also carry hazardous materials, such as fuel and oil, stored in leaking, unsafe containers.

In response, Monroe County is advocating for legislative amendments to F.S. 705.103 and 823.11 to **clearly define and classify** migrant vessels, **allowing for their immediate removal and destruction to prevent further environmental damage.**

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislative changes to F.S. 705.103 and 823.11 as recommended by staff to expedite the removal of migrant vessels.

**3) Funding and Management of Monroe County Vessel Pump-out Program**

The pristine waters of the Florida Keys, within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, attract high numbers of boaters from across the State and country. These waters are designated as a No Discharge Zone (NDZ) by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Sanctuary, prohibiting the discharge of sewage from vessels. To help boaters comply with this regulation, Monroe County implemented a large-scale Mobile Vessel Pump-out Program in 2013. Monroe County is now expanding its efforts with a marina pump out initiative, aimed at increasing the number of available shoreside pump-out facilities throughout the Keys.

Monroe County requires all occupied vessels to provide a “proof of pump-out” and offers a free weekly mobile pump-out service. These measures have ensured nearly 100% compliance with NDZ regulations.

To date, the Mobile Vessel Pump-out Program has conducted over 200,000 pump outs, capturing over 2.7 million gallons of vessel sewage. Monroe County has traditionally funded this essential

service through Boater Improvement Funds, Clean Vessel Act grants, and direct legislative appropriations. By offering this service at no charge, the county effectively incentivizes boaters to utilize the pump-outs, safeguarding water quality and protecting public health and the marine environment.

In 2021, the Legislature transferred management of the Pump-out Program to the DEP. However, contract and funding issues at FDEP in late 2022 prompted the temporary return of the program's administration and funding to Monroe County for the remainder of the fiscal year. Despite these challenges, Monroe County and FDEP staff worked together to ensure seamless program operations during the transition.

At Monroe's request, FDEP included funding and management of the pump-out program in its legislative budget request, and this support is expected to continue.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued FDEP funding and management of the pump-out program in Monroe County to ensure continued compliance with NDZ regulations.

## OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING PREEMPTION

**CHALLENGE:** In 2021, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law HB 735, enacting Chapter 2021-214, Laws of Florida preempting local governments' ability to issue new local contractors' licenses. Current licenses expire on July 1, 2023, after which time only State-licensed general contractors and homeowners will be able to obtain work permits. Without a local license, small specialty contractors may not obtain work permits, preventing them from being able to perform work in their trade.

Monroe County has over 300 local contractors many of whom have spent years working only under their local specialty license, who may no longer pull permits as they have been doing their entire careers. The loss of this licensing threatens their livelihoods and businesses, and they are urging Monroe County to help them by asking state lawmakers to repeal this law.

Local licenses enable local contractors the ability to pull permits and perform work without having to obtain a state license that may require knowledge or skills that exceed the scope of specialty contractors. Some local contractors have been unable to qualify to test for a state specialty license because their experience is only local and not under a licensed state contractor, even if that experience is several decades.

Local licenses provide small contractors with a valuable marketing tool because they serve as an official, scrutinized demonstration of their backgrounds and qualifications, enabling them to differentiate themselves from contractors without that vetted experience.

Local licensing benefits small contractors' ability to be hired by licensed general contractors as sub-contractors. Because general contractors are required to carry insurance for themselves and subs, they prefer to hire sub-contractors that are already licensed and insured, to save them the cost of having to carry additional insurance.

Local licensing also exists to protect consumers by giving consumers a tool for differentiating between contractors with experience and qualifications from those without and ensuring qualified workmanship by contractors with sufficient insurance to protect homeowners and workers. Additionally, insured contractors protect homeowners who often are not properly informed that they are at risk of liability for any harm that befalls unlicensed, uninsured contractors working on their property.

Finally, the local licensing ensures compliance with federal regulations by requiring that contractors have knowledge of unique local environmental regulations, like federal floodplain or Endangered Species Act

requirements. For example, fence installations in Key Deer habitat are a violation of federal law. An unlicensed contractor may not be aware of such regulations banning fences. Violations of federal laws leave the homeowner and the County liable.

In the 2023 session, the County secured a partial exemption, and now seeks a full exemption for Monroe County. The County will also work with the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) and other counties to pursue the repeal or significant amendment of this preemption.

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** clarifying the language that fully exempts Monroe County as an Area of Critical State Concern.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation repealing Chapter 2021-214, Laws of Florida, including all the created or amended statutory provisions presently in effect, such as s. 163.211, F.S., to allow counties to retain the authority to operate programs requiring the licensure, certification, or registration of local contractors, and other occupations as determined by each county’s governing body by ordinance or resolution.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** amending the law to remove the expiration date of local government occupational licensing requirements and programs existing on or before the effective date of Chapter 2021-214, Laws of Florida, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of county residents and businesses.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**CHALLENGE:** The Florida Keys is dependent upon safe, resilient, sustainable, and efficient access and travel along US 1. Traffic congestion and safety issues along this singular highway that connects the 112-mile-long chain of islands affects the health, safety, welfare, economic sustainability, and quality of life of residents, businesses, and visitors.

- **Congestion-Reduction Projects on US 1:** In 2020, the Commission approved a set of projects along US 1, developed by a Keys-wide intergovernmental committee (Florida Keys Transportation Coordination Committee). The goal of this ranked list of projects (such as bus stops, intersection improvements, turn lanes, signage, and increased public transit) is to improve traffic flow and safety on US 1. A project of particular importance is the intersection of US 1, near MM 106, a significant and costly project. The project list was transmitted that list to FDOT for inclusion in the County’s work plan. Continued coordination with FDOT District 6 to program these into the District 6 Work Program is a priority.

Additionally, the County has requested FDOT to expedite the programming of the proposed projects listed within the FDOT District 6 Monroe County Freight Mobility Improvement Study into the District 6 Work Program.

- **Army Corp Projects on US 1:** Continued coordination with FDOT and the Army Corp regarding the six revetments projects along US 1. Staff successfully negotiated with FDOT to program \$0.56 million for design to meet the match requirement for federal funding secured through the Army Corps of Engineers Keys Coastal Resilience Program.
- **Card Sound Bridge Replacement Project:** This is our most significant local bridge replacement project to date (size, evacuation route, new alignment expected). Staff continues to collaborate with District 6 staff regarding the imminent start of the PDE phase. We also need to continue coordinating with FDOT regarding the funding necessary for the next phases (design and construction.)

- **Public Transit:** In 2022, in a local effort to reduce congestion on US 1, the County embarked on a new countywide transit initiative.
- **Bicycle Safety:** Monroe supports safer bike paths and fewer distracted drivers, to improve safety on our roads for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
  - More shared use paths: Monroe supports continued efforts that extend, maintain, and improve shared use paths for bicycles and pedestrians on US 1, including the historic bridges and the Overseas Heritage Trail, and on local roads where feasible.
  - Reducing driver distraction: Drivers distracted by their phones account for 34% of crashes in Florida (representing 86,760 crashes, 732 deaths, and 55,247 injuries) and the problem is only growing. In Florida, screen interaction time increased by 5 seconds per hour from 2021 to 2022. This seemingly minor increase caused an estimated 3,500 additional crashes which cost an additional \$84 million and many lives. In Monroe County from 2020-2023, there were 3,631 crashes from distracted driving, including 17 fatal crashes, 571 injury crashes and 2,911 property damage crashes.

#### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued coordination with FDOT regarding the inclusion of the Commission’s prioritized projects in five-year work plan, and to expedite projects identified in FDOT’s freight study.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued coordination with FDOT and FDEP for the Florida Keys’ Coastal Resilience Project regarding the flood mitigation revetments on US 1.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** robust state funding for the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP). This funding is for maintaining and improving existing local bridges and local roads.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued efforts to advance County requests for funding from the local bridge set-aside program (federal funds) for local bridge replacements.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** efforts to improve bicycle safety, including more robust laws addressing phone use during driving and support for improved and expanded shared use paths along US 1 and local roads.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** robust funding for TAP program, and advocate for an increase to the program’s funding limit.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** funding for all modes of the state and local transportation infrastructure network.

### **HOME RULE**

**CHALLENGE:** The State Legislature frequently and consistently pursues local government preemption legislation that violates local home rule powers. Home rule, conferred to Florida counties by Article VIII, section 1(f) and 1(g) of the Florida Constitution (1968), and by section 125.01, Florida Statutes, is the principle that the government closest to the people is the appropriate authority to serve the needs and requirements of the community. The preservation of this concept is essential to the operation of county governments in Florida, which allows counties to develop and implement county-based solutions to local problems.

- **Preemptions:** Commonly recognized preemptions include vacation rentals, local occupational licensing, single-use plastic bags, sunblock use, home-based businesses, seaports/cruise ships, tree-trimming. But they also include a wider range relating to agricultural, utilities infrastructure, environmental, fees/taxation, and land use. **Anticipated preemption legislation for 2025 includes term limits for local elected officials and sovereign immunity.**
- **Unfunded Mandates:** The State Legislature frequently passes legislation that compels local governments to provide a service, program, or benefit without providing the appropriate funding.

Local governments face the burden of using local tax dollars to finance functions that they have little control over and compromise local governments' ability to provide services requested by our local communities.

- **Cost shifts:** The State Legislature frequently passes legislation that passes along the costs or increases local share requirements for services traditionally funded by the State, such as but not limited to County Health Departments, Courts, Clerks' offices, Juvenile Justice, and mental health services.
- **Restrictions of County Revenue Sources:** At the same time the State Legislation imposes more mandates and costs, it often pursues legislation reducing, restricting, or eliminating sources of revenue for county services, such as the Local Business Tax, Communication Services Tax, impact fees, transportation concurrency fees, State Park admission fees, and sales taxes.

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **OPPOSE** legislation that would revise current law in a manner that reduces or eliminates current local government-related revenues or preempts home rule authority.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** efforts to shift costs of services, implement unfunded mandates, reduce State funding for infrastructure, programs and services, or other legislation that is costly and limits Monroe County's ability to serve the needs of its citizens.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** legislation that preempts the legislative and policy-making powers of counties used to regulate land use and implement local zoning controls.

**GENERAL LEGISLATIVE ISSUES**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation and funding to support continued implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation and funding that protects and preserves Florida's coral reef tract.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** the continued designation of the Florida Keys as an Area of Critical State Concern.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** legislation that prevents counties from having local environmental protection programs that are stricter in nature than State or federal regulatory programs.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** any legislation that restricts State, county, and city government purchases of conservation land, and which would effectively eliminate land conservation efforts in the Florida Keys.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislative efforts that strengthen the existing roles and home rule powers of local governments to implement comprehensive planning programs that guide future development and encourage the most appropriate use of land and natural resources.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** robust funding for the Florida Forever Grant Program and Florida Communities Trust that provides for land acquisition, recreational opportunities for parks, open space, greenways trails and conservation to help meet growth challenges and protect natural resources.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** legislation that preempts local communities from banning single use plastic bags, particularly coastal communities where plastic bags are not only an environmental pollutant but also pose a danger to ocean and coastal wildlife.

- ✓ **SUPPORT** county home rule authority, and current statutory provisions, which allow counties to retain their current transportation concurrency systems, and impact fees, as adopted by local ordinance.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** state legislation to prohibit new well stimulation activities, including hydraulic fracturing.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** efforts to increase offshore drilling activities.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** streamlining the permitting and regulatory processes for solar product manufacturers, installers, and consumers, and further supports reducing burdensome regulations that hinder solar market penetration.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies that provide appropriate resources and incentives to local governments to achieve statewide recycling goals, and further supports comprehensive recycling initiatives that encourage increased participation of the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** measures that support the operations and functions of local emergency management.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** assistance for building/identifying an Out of County Shelter for residents of Monroe County in cases of mandatory evacuation during storm-related events and other emergencies.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** increased funding to county base grant funding.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** polices that bolster funding of the Emergency Management Preparation and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA), which is to serve as a funding source for State and local emergency management, preparedness, communication, and training, and opposing legislative sweeps of these trust fund monies.

## HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** increased state general revenue funding for County Health Departments (CHDs), any State reductions to the County Health Department Trust Funds, and policies that preserve and strengthen the ability of CHDs to provide primary care and direct patient care services, particularly in communities without adequate substitutes or alternative providers for these services and maintain a coordinated system of county health departments (CHDs) that is centrally housed within the Department of Health (DOH).
- ✓ **SUPPORT** increased funding for core and crisis mental health and substance abuse services.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** efforts to increase supportive housing, employment, and education initiatives for people with behavioral health issues and/or disabilities.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** state funding for the provision of Baker Act *juvenile* services and facilities in the communities in which the juvenile and his/her family lives.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** funding for the Florida Healthy Start and Healthy Families program.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** increased state funding and policies that reduce food insecurity, to 1) increase the health and productivity of those currently without consistent access to healthy food, 2) consequently reduce the demand for public health and human services, 3) improve the financial security of those in need.

- ✓ **SUPPORT** the continuation of a coordinated Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) system, and appropriate and dedicated State funding for the TD program; protect the TD trust fund.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** policies that further shift state Medicaid costs to counties, and the continued evaluation of the county-state cost share arrangement.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation drawing down federal funds made available to Florida under the PPACA to expand health care coverage to certain individuals who earn up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, if such a program does not further shift Medicaid costs to counties.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies that protect the ability of counties to provide coordinated, countywide systems of emergency medical services, and not limit the ability of county EMS transportation providers to be reimbursed for their services.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** maintaining a countywide regulatory system for EMS through the current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) process.

## VETERANS

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies that allocate state funds to hire County Veterans Offices in counties to increase services and federal benefits for Florida veterans.

## CLERKS FUNDING/JUDGESHIPS

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued attention to the adequate funding for the functions of the clerks of court, including an allocation process that results in a fair and sufficient distribution of court generated revenue.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** the decertification of any Monroe County Court judgeships and any reductions to the local judiciary.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** consolidation of judicial circuits.

## FLORIDA RETIREMENT SYSTEM

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **OPPOSE** any benefit changes that result in an increase in the FRS county and county employee contribution rates.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** requiring all legislation that potentially results in an increase in the FRS contribution rate or the closing of the traditional pension plan to new employees to be analyzed and evaluated to determine the direct fiscal impact of proposed changes to all local and State government to be eligible for consideration.

## LIBRARIES

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** recurring and non-recurring funding of State Aid to Public Libraries Grant Program, Library Cooperative Grant Program, Public Library Construction Grant, and Career Online High School program.

## COUNTY JAILS, INMATE MEDICAL COSTS, JUVENILE JUSTICE

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies that provide Medicaid eligibility for persons incarcerated in county jails while waiting disposition of their cases and to ensure that existing Medicaid benefits are not terminated during incarceration.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies and initiatives which reduce juvenile detention through prevention, civil citation, treatment, and rehabilitation services.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** policies that ensure adequate safety supervision and facility maintenance at juvenile residential assessment centers and secure detention facilities.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** state investments in juvenile facilities to improve the conditions of secure confinement for detained youth without such costs being shifted to the counties.
- ✓ **OPPOSE** sentencing of State inmates to county jails, but support counties' ability to contract with the Department of Corrections for housing State inmates.

## HOMELESSNESS

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- ✓ **SUPPORT** legislation that creates a dedicated State funding source for homelessness programs and services.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** continued coordination with the State's homeless planning council, specifically as it recommends policies in support of the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** the development of policies that would allow local governments to work with the State and federal government to serve target populations: the chronically homeless, Veterans and Families and children, with particular emphasis on children aging out of the foster care system.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** a process that would waive the fees related to obtaining personal identification from the State for persons identified as homeless.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

- ❖ **Mayor Jim Scholl, District 3**  
*[BOCC3@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:BOCC3@monroecounty-fl.gov) 305-292-3430*
- ❖ **Mayor Pro Tem Michelle Lincoln, District 2**  
*[BOCC2@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:BOCC2@monroecounty-fl.gov) 305-292-4512*
- ❖ **Craig Cates, District 1**  
*[BOCC1@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:BOCC1@monroecounty-fl.gov) 305-292-3440*
- ❖ **Commissioner David Rice, District 4**  
*[BOCC4@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:BOCC4@monroecounty-fl.gov) 305-289-6000*
- ❖ **Commissioner Holly Merrill Raschein, District 5**  
*[BOCC5@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:BOCC5@monroecounty-fl.gov) 305-453-8787*

### COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

- ❖ Christine Hurley  
*[Hurley-christine@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:Hurley-christine@monroecounty-fl.gov)  
Office: 305-292-4441  
Cell: 305-393-3361*

### DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

- ❖ Lisa Tennyson  
*[Tennyson-lisa@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:Tennyson-lisa@monroecounty-fl.gov)  
Office: 305-292-4441  
Cell: 305-509-1709*

### COUNTY ATTORNEY

- ❖ Bob Shillinger  
*[Shillinger-bob@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:Shillinger-bob@monroecounty-fl.gov)  
Office: 305-292-3470  
Cell: 305-747-4717*

### LOBBYISTS

- ❖ Capitol Group: Robert Reyes, Tallahassee, Fl 850-425-4050
- ❖ Gray-Robinson: Dean Cannon, Ryan Matthews, Angela Drzewiecki, Tallahassee, Fl 850-577-9090
- ❖ Capital City Consulting: Nick Iarossi, Andrew Ketchal, Tallahassee Fl 850-222-9075
- ❖ Brightwater Strategies: Noah Valenstein, Tallahassee, Fl 850-528-0661
- ❖ Anfield Consulting: Edgar Fernandez, Tallahassee, Fl 866-960-5939