



Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners 2021 Federal Legislative Program



Priorities

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

- **SUPPORT** a long-term extension to the program (set to expire September 30, 2021) that ensures financial sustainability, while not pricing out policy holders. This includes providing premium discounts for private and community-based mitigation efforts.
- **OPPOSE** the implementation of Risk Rating 2.0 (set to go into effect October 1, 2021) until further details of the program are released.

Beach Nourishment

- **REQUEST** the Army Corps of Engineers reevaluate its Perpetual Storm Damage Reduction Easement policy, which requires 100% of beachfront property owner easements in perpetuity for areas landward of the Erosion Control Line within the limits of the planned Sand Key nourishment project.
- **REQUEST** funding for the design and engineering of the Treasure Island, Sand Key, and Long Key federal beach nourishment projects.

Transportation/Infrastructure

- **SUPPORT** the timely reauthorization of the FAST Act (set to expire on September 30, 2021), which provides funding over the next five years for transportation, highway, and transit programs.
- **SUPPORT** strategies that address the Federal Highway Trust Fund's declining revenues in order to adequately fund future transportation needs.
- **REQUEST** that the new FAST Act reestablishes the federal discretionary bridge program that expired in 2005; and continues support for Advanced Traffic Management Systems.
- **REQUEST** comprehensive infrastructure legislation that includes federal support for new discretionary grant programs to harden and enhance the resiliency of transportation and other public infrastructure; supports local projects that address sea level rise and storm surge issues; and addresses the needs of public water infrastructure systems.

Offshore Oil Drilling

- **SUPPORT** an extension to the current moratorium on oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida, set to expire in 2022.

COVID-19 Federal Support for Local Governments

- **SUPPORT** continued direct, flexible funding for local governments to assist with critical local response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **SUPPORT** timely federal reimbursement of FEMA public assistance funding and the development of clear and consistent reimbursement guidance and policies.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)



Issue:

Over a third of the County is in a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) where flood insurance is required by most lenders and federally backed loans. Without affordable flood insurance many of our residents and businesses may be priced out of their homes/businesses and high rates will negatively impact the real estate economy in the county, especially on non-waterfront building inventory in the floodplain. We have a proactive floodplain management program which serves to protect property owners from flood loss, which should continue to be rewarded with rate discounts through the Community Rating System (CRS).

The intent of Risk Rating 2.0 is to use new technology and data to give more accurate risk ratings to properties, which will correspond with fairer rates. The new rating methodology will not use the FIRM, but will look at property and building specific characteristics, such as foundation type, elevation, distance to water and type and size of water body, and a broader range of flood frequencies and sources. Floodplain regulations and flood insurance requirements, though, will still be based on the FIRM.

It makes no sense for the County to regulate to the FIRM (Flood Insurance **Rate** Map) while flood insurance is not rated on the FIRM. The insurance and floodplain management sides of FEMA need to better coordinate in advance of implementation or property owners may build to a standard that results in high flood insurance rates. If we know the equation for risk, then we can ensure we are requiring development standards that will not result in unsafe structures with unaffordable insurance rates.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT a long-term extension to the NFIP (set to expire September 30, 2021) that ensures financial sustainability, while not pricing out policy holders. This includes providing premium discounts for private and community-based mitigation efforts.

OPPOSE the implementation of Risk 2.0 (set to go into effect October 1, 2021) until further details of the program are released.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

Beach Nourishment

Issue:

Pinellas County has partnered with the Army Corps of Engineers to nourish Sand Key since 1987 when it was first constructed. Since then Sand Key has been nourished four additional times, every 6 years. We are now thirty years into the project and this much needed cyclical nourishment is in jeopardy.

The Army Corps of Engineers' overly broad interpretation of WRDA 1986 has left the County struggling to obtain public access easements where in many places sand is not intended to be placed. If left unchecked this overly burdensome public access requirement may cause wide public beaches to erode limiting the available space for the public to enjoy and the protection these projects afford.

Recommendation:

REQUEST the Army Corps of Engineers reevaluate its Perpetual Storm Damage Reduction Easement policy, which requires 100% of beachfront property owner easements in perpetuity for areas landward of the Erosion Control Line within the limits of the planned Sand Key nourishment project.

REQUEST funding for the design and construction of the Treasure Island, Sand Key, and Long Key federal beach nourishment projects.

Additional Support:

Barrier Island Government Council



Transportation/Infrastructure



Issue:

The Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program established a discretionary program that set aside federal funds for the replacement or rehabilitation of bridges. The program provided a federal cost share of 80%, available for the fiscal year and three following years. The program was not authorized after 2005. Should this program be included in the next FAST Act, this would be a significant source of federal funding for the replacement of the Dunedin Causeway.

During the 116th Congress legislation was introduced and passed out of committees that would have provided funding for infrastructure projects that focus on increasing the resiliency of critical infrastructure. Priority projects included wastewater and transportation infrastructure, hurricane and flood protection, modernizing traffic technology, regional transportation projects that reduce bottlenecks, and electric vehicle infrastructure. It is critical that Congress prioritizes these types of projects in and transportation and infrastructure packages authorized this year.

For years the federal government, like state and local governments, has funded surface transportation through taxes placed on motor vehicle fuel, commonly known as gas taxes. These fixed rates are tied to per gallon fuel consumption and have not been increased at the federal level since 1993. Due to factors including increased fuel efficiency and increased use of electric vehicles, gas tax revenues have and will continue to decline. This has led to insufficient federal funding for aging transportation infrastructure.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT the timely reauthorization of the FAST Act (set to expire on September 30, 2021), which provides funding over the next five years for transportation, highway, and transit programs.

SUPPORT strategies that address the Federal Highway Trust Fund's declining revenues in order to adequately fund future transportation needs.

REQUEST that the new FAST Act reestablishes the federal discretionary bridge program that expired in 2005; and continues support for Advanced Traffic Management Systems.

REQUEST comprehensive infrastructure legislation that includes federal support for new discretionary grant programs to harden and enhance the resiliency of transportation and other public infrastructure; supports local projects that address sea level rise and storm surge issues; and addresses the needs of public water infrastructure systems.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

National Association of Counties

Offshore Oil Drilling



Issue:

Since 2006, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act has included a moratorium on oil and gas leasing in portions of the Gulf of Mexico. The moratorium covers a portion of the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area, and most of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area. The specific locations restricted from leasing activities include the portion of the Eastern Planning Area within 125 miles of Florida, all areas in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line, and the area within the Central Planning Area that is within 100 miles of Florida.

The current moratorium on lands in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico is set to expire in 2022. Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott have introduced legislation that would extend the moratorium through 2032.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT an extension to the current moratorium on oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida, set to expire in 2022.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

COVID-19 Federal Support for Local Government



Issue:

Pinellas County continues to address and mitigate the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic to the public by directly supporting state and federal efforts. The County continues to assist in testing, vaccination, financial assistance, and numerous other efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This financial and public health crisis continues to have massive budgetary effects on county government. Pinellas County Government has sustained revenue losses exceeding \$50 million to date.

Pinellas County received \$170.1 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to address the community's most pressing needs related to COVID-19. All CARES Act funds have been committed, and payments are ongoing. To date, \$153 million has been disbursed through various assistance programs focused on the pandemic.

Addressing lost revenues will continue to present ever-increasing challenges as lost revenues impact local government's ability to maintain critical services that are needed with and without a pandemic. The impact of lost revenues is only exacerbated when additional, pandemic-driven expenses are incurred.

Continued federal relief should be focused on the following:

- Restoration of lost revenues for local governments
- Ongoing COVID Related County Expenses
 - Public Testing Sites
 - Public Vaccination Sites
 - PPE Stockpile
- COVID-Related Community Needs
 - Outreach and Case Management
 - Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention
 - Business/Economic Recovery
 - Behavioral Health and Health Education/Outreach
- Related Administrative Needs
 - Hold harmless for false statements/information from applicants
 - Greater flexibility
 - Streamline/improve coordination between funding sources/administrators

Recommendation:

SUPPORT continued direct, flexible funding for local governments to assist with critical local response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SUPPORT timely federal reimbursement of FEMA public assistance funding and the development of clear and consistent reimbursement guidance and policies.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

National Association of Counties