

The City of Coconut Creek, Florida 2014 Federal Legislative Agenda





Drafted for the
Coconut Creek City Commission
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Mental Health Initiatives to Reduce Gun and Other Violence

Support legislative proposals intended to reduce instances of gun violence. **Support** legislation that expands community-based resources for mental health care coverage, including the Excellence in Mental Health Act, the Mental Health First Aid Bill, or similar legislation. **Support** administrative actions that would further reduce gun violence.

Public Safety

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

Transportation Authorization

Support funding of trails programs, through the return of dedicated funding for recreational trails and/or alternative funding for these activities. **Monitor** potential increase in gas taxes or other funding options to replenish the Highway Trust Fund and support infrastructure maintenance and improvements. **Monitor** activity related to the development of the FTA's National Public Transit Safety Plan for impacts to the City of Coconut Creek. **Support** opportunities to secure funding for the City of Coconut Creek's priorities via this and future legislation.

Community Development Block Grants

Support adequate funding for the Community Development Block Grant program for future fiscal years. **Oppose** legislative efforts that propose continued funding reductions for the CDBG program. **Monitor** opportunities that align with the City's current development projects and priorities.

Economic Development Administration Programs

Support City of Coconut Creek Economic Development Administration grant applications as applicable. **Monitor** continued funding of the Economic Development Administration.

Waters of the United States

Monitor activity related to the EPA's proposed rule on waters of the U.S. **Oppose** any aspects of the proposed rule that could lead to unrealistic and over-burdensome regulations that would negatively affect local governments. **Monitor** EPA activities regarding further regulation of storm water.

Offshore Energy Exploration

Oppose any relaxation of the prohibition against leases on permits for drilling oil or gas wells within the boundaries of Florida's territorial seas. **Oppose** any legislation that would prevent the Florida Department of Environmental Protection from continuing to block requests for offshore drilling in Federal waters off Florida's coast.

Hydraulic Fracturing



Monitor Federal discussion regarding hydraulic fracturing for impacts to future Florida oil and gas extraction.

Siting of Wireless Facilities

Monitor activity related to the FCC's rulemaking on the siting of wireless facilities. **Support** efforts to further clarify aspects within the proposed rule in order to avoid an overly-broad interpretation of the law. **Oppose** aspects of the proposed rule that would significantly curb local authority to review, and approve or deny, changes to existing wireless facilities.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency Sustainability Programs

Support City of Coconut Creek sustainability programs as appropriate. **Monitor** opportunities to secure Federal grant funding or develop relationships to expand upon the City's efforts. **Monitor** opportunities for alternative energy, electric vehicles, and other energy related technologies.

Tax Exempt Bonds

Oppose legislation that would threaten the tax exemption on state and local bonds, including a 28 percent cap on tax-exempt municipal bonds.

Remote Sales-Tax Legislation

Support legislation that requires companies making catalog and internet sales to collect and remit the associated taxes.

Public Pension Reform

Monitor Federal legislative proposals related to public pensions, i.e., the Public Employee Pension Transparency Act, which could significantly impact the Florida Retirement System.



FEDERAL ISSUE: Mental Health Initiatives to Reduce Gun and Other Violence

BACKGROUND: HOW IT MAY AFFECT THE CITY OF COCONUT CREEK: The incidences of gun violence that took place in Aurora, Colorado, Newtown, Connecticut and other American cities in 2013 prompted renewed attention on the issue of gun violence, with many calling for gun control or mental health legislation in an attempt to prevent future tragedies.

Following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, several members of the 113th Congress indicated they would support additional gun control measures. In the Senate, Dianne Feinstein (CA) introduced legislation to renew a ban on assault weapons. Meanwhile, in the House of Representatives, Rep. Caroline McCarthy (NY) introduced a bill that would ban high capacity ammunition magazines. Other members of Congress also suggested legislation that would close loopholes in the law that allows individuals to avoid background checks or expand gun safety and education programs. Despite all of the attention on this issue, none of these bills were passed and their outlook remains grim.

One aspect of the violence debate that did receive some traction were efforts to improve mental health care. Even before Sandy Hook, the Affordable Care Act (ACA, also known as Obamacare) included significant reforms to mental health coverage. Specifically, the legislation named mental health treatment as an essential health benefit that insurance plans must cover starting in 2014. While most large-group plans previously offered some kind of mental health benefits, only 18 percent of small-group and individual plans covered mental health. Furthermore, the Medicaid expansion envisioned as part of the ACA may provide as many as 2.8 million people with a serious mental illness with coverage. It is thought that Medicaid's mental health coverage has historically been better than private insurance.

In addition to these provisions, the Administration has finally begun to implement the 2008 Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which requires insurers to cover mental health at a level that is comparable to their physical health coverage.

Congress also introduced several pieces of legislation related to increasing access to mental health, such as Sen. Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Rep. Doris Matsui's (CA) bipartisan "Excellence in Mental Health Act" (S. 264 and H.R. 1263) that would allow community clinics to receive Medicaid reimbursements when providing treatment to low-income patients, and Sen. Al Franken (MN) and Rep. Grace Napolitano's (CA) "Mental Health in Schools Act" (S. 195 and H.R. 628) that would grant funds to place therapists in public schools. Sen. Mark Begich (AK) and a bipartisan group of Senators also introduced the "Mental Health First Aid Bill" that would expand mental health first aid training to help the public identify, understand, and address crisis situations. The bill would also provide grants for mental health first aid training programs for teachers, first responders, police officers, schools, university administrators, veterans and nurses. Finally, Sen. Franken and Rep. Nugent (FL) have introduced S. 162 and H.R. 401, both of which would fund mental health programs in the criminal justice system. Though none of these bills were passed in 2013, they have bipartisan support and are seen as having a greater chance of being passed in 2014 than other initiatives to help reduce violence.

POSITION: **Support** legislative proposals intended to reduce instances of gun violence. **Support** legislation that expands community-based resources for mental health care coverage, including the



Excellence in Mental Health Act, the Mental Health First Aid Bill, or similar legislation. ***Support*** administrative actions that would further reduce gun violence.