

FEDERAL

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2018
INNOVATION
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PUBLIC POLICY TEAM



2018
INNOVATION
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CONFERENCE



Ginger Delegal
Executive Director
gdelegal
(850) 294-9295



Davin Suggs
Director of Public Policy
dsuggs
(850) 320-2635

Susan Alford

Deputy Director of
Public Policy
sharbin
(770) 546-8845



Laura Youmans
Legislative Counsel
lyoumans
(850) 294-1838

Casey Perkins

Chief of Policy Research
cperkins
(850) 264-4527



Tonnette S. Graham
Associate Director of
Public Policy
tgraham
(850) 294-1838

Tiffany Henderson

Senior Public Policy
Coordinator
thenderson



Email ending: @flcounties.com

Florida Association of Counties
100 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
flcounties.com
@flcounties



**Federal Committee
Policy Workbook
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2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE



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Nancy Detert, Sarasota
Michael Moran, Sarasota
Lee Constantine, Seminole
Heather Post, Volusia

Staff

Eric Poole
epoole@fl-counties.com

Susan Harbin Alford
sharbin@fl-counties.com

2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE



**FAC Federal Policy Committee
Status of Federal Priorities
September 27, 2018**

NFIP

- The “National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Extension Act of 2018,” extended NFIP reauthorization through November 30, 2018. This is the seventh extension.
- The cost of Hurricane Florence could prompt an effort to pass NFIP reform legislation in November, although last year’s hurricane season prompted similar interest without result.
- The central disagreement is over how much of the market should go to private insurers.
- Reforms with broader agreement include improving mitigation efforts.
- Some lawmakers are eyeing a potential disaster relief package as a possible vehicle.
- Of all the NFIP reform bills introduced to date, S. 1368, the SAFE Act, co-sponsored by Senators Rubio and Nelson is most closely aligned with FAC priorities. Highlights include:
 - Reauthorizes the NFIP for six years.
 - No Exorbitant Rate Hikes. Caps annual increases to 10%. Currently, premiums rise by up to 25%/year.
 - Cuts Wasteful Expenses to Pay for Investments. Freezes interest payments and establishes new controls for private insurance company compensation in order to reinvest in proactive mitigation efforts and affordability measures, including low-interest loans for homeowners’ mitigation projects and affordability vouchers.
 - Invests in Mitigation. Provides funding levels for large-scale, communitywide mitigation efforts, and mitigation assistance programs.
 - Expands Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) Coverage. Increases the maximum limit for ICC coverage to better reflect the costs of mitigation projects and expands eligibility in order to encourage more proactive mitigation.
 - Funds LiDAR Mapping. Authorizes funding for Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology for more accurate mapping of flood risk across the country, reducing confusion and generating better data.
 - Oversight of Write Your Own (WYO) Companies. Caps compensation for WYO companies to 22.4 percent of written premiums, creates new oversight measures for insurance companies and vendors, and provides FEMA with greater authority to terminate contractors that have a track record of abuse.
- In April, FEMA released its “Affordability Framework.”
- The Affordability Framework concluded that Congress should shift from providing policy discounts based on the age of a home and when flood maps went into effect to a system that directs benefits to households in which flood insurance is financially burdensome.
- The report provides policymakers with four main affordability program design options to consider:

For more information contact Val Gelnovatch, The Ferguson Group, vgelnovatch@tfgnet.com

- Income-based premium sharing: Lower-income households would be responsible for paying for a portion of the premium amount and FEMA covers the remainder of the premium amount. In this option, as household income levels rise, the portion of the premium that would be covered by FEMA decreases.
- The premium burden-based benefit: Lower-income households would be responsible for paying for a portion of their income for flood insurance. If the required proportion of income is not sufficient to cover the insurance premiums, FEMA would cover the remainder of the premium amount.
- The housing burden-based benefit: Lower-income households that spend more than a specified amount of their income on housing-related expenses, such as mortgage amount, taxes and insurance would receive assistance.
- Mitigation grants or loans: This approach would complement the other program designs. Under this design option, the government would provide financial assistance to fund structure-specific mitigation activities that lead to reduced risk. The assistance would be a grant for lower-income households and a loan for more moderate-income households.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT S. 1368**, the Sustainable, Affordable, Fair and Efficient commonly known as the “SAFE Act”
- **OPPOSE** any reauthorization efforts that are detrimental to policyholders, local governments and the integrity of the program.

Water Resources Development Act

- On September 10th bipartisan leadership of the House Transportation and Infrastructure, House Energy and Commerce, and Senate Environment and Public Works Committees publicly unveiled text of a “pre-conferenced” water resources authorization bill, the “[America’s Water Infrastructure Act \(AWIA\) of 2018](#).”
- The House passed the bill on September 13th.
- A Senate vote is likely within the next several weeks. The President is expected to sign the bill upon arrival.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** bi-annual passage of the Water Resources Development Act that authorizes Corps of Engineers projects and policies that often have state-wide impacts to Florida, including Everglades restoration, port and inlet construction, and beach nourishment projects.
- **SUPPORT** restoration of congressionally directed spending. Without its congressionally-directed spending authority for Army Corps appropriations, the Congress is completely reliant on funding in the President’s budget, with no means of providing appropriations to plus up underfunded or omitted projects.

Opioids

- President Trump declared the opioid crisis a national emergency during the summer of 2017.
- Senate leaders from both parties floated an opioids package in late August, “The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018,” through a hotline process used to gauge support for a measure before it goes to the floor.
- The Senate opioid package is a combination of three packages of opioids measures approved in Senate committees earlier this year. The legislation is not as wide-ranging as the House-passed opioids bills (including [H.R. 6](#)), which made more changes to Medicare and Medicaid payment rules.
- President Trump may have complicated the issue by throwing his support behind a law to crack down on international shipments of illicit fentanyl.
- Timing for action on the legislation remains unclear.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** providing life-saving interventions, medically-assisted detoxification programs, and diversions from the criminal justice system for those suffering from opioid addiction.
- **SUPPORT** efforts to stop international and interstate opioid trafficking and increased penalties for dealers and traffickers whose actions result in loss of life.
- **SUPPORT** federal assistance for first responders to carry naloxone to treat suspected overdoses.
- **SUPPORT** addressing the Institute of Mental Disease provision that limits the number of Medicaid-funded beds available for substance abuse treatment.

Disaster Recovery

Recovery & Preparedness

- Funding for FEMA mitigation programs in House & Senate NFIP reform bills:
 - H.R. 2874 would authorize \$225 million per year for Flood Mitigation Assistance grants
 - S. 1313 would reallocate current surcharge to help fund \$400 million in mitigation programs.
 - S. 1368 would authorize \$1 billion annually over 6 years for Flood Mitigation Assistance grants and \$500 million for Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants.
 - S. 1571 would authorize \$200 million annually over six years for Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants
- The House also passed the “Promoting Flood Risk Mitigation Act” ([H.R. 5846](#)), which requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study FEMA policies for helping state and local governments buy flood-damaged properties. The GAO would have to report to Congress on the efficacy of FEMA’s policies and ways they could be streamlined within one year of the bill’s enactment.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** changes to the Stafford Act that will ensure counties are not denied a disaster project appeal by FEMA, whenever the state, while serving as the grantee, fails to meet the regulatory timeline for project appeals.
- **SUPPORT** increased investment in mitigation programs such as the Pre-disaster Mitigation Program, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and other partnerships between local and federal governments to complete mitigation projects and increase resiliency to disasters.

- **OPPOSE** programmatic changes that would increase the local cost share for disaster recovery, such as the implementation of a disaster deductible.

De-obligation:

- The de-obligation language was included in the House FAA bill (HR 4), which passed the House on April 27, 2018. It is now pending in the Senate. FAA authorization expires on October 1, 2018.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** legislation that prohibits the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from de-obligating from counties previously-awarded disaster funds for projects that have been certified complete by the state for at least three years.

Offshore Drilling

- Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke says he is committed to ensuring "there are no new oil and gas platforms off the coast of Florida" as part of a draft plan for selling offshore leases that should be released in the fall.
- Congressman F. Rooney introduced [H.R. 4770](#), the Protecting and Securing Florida's Coastline Act, which amends the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 to permanently extend current moratorium boundaries.
- Congressman Rooney is also a co-sponsor of two additional bills related to offshore drilling: [H.R. 2002](#), the Florida Coastal Protection Act, which provides for permanent extension of the eastern Gulf of Mexico moratorium, straits of Florida planning region, and South Florida planning area; and [H.R. 2261](#), the Marine Oil Spill Prevention Act, which extends the existing eastern Gulf of Mexico moratorium to 2027 and codifies current drilling regulations.

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA), which bans oil and gas leasing within 125 miles off Florida's Gulf Coast until 2022
- **SUPPORT** keeping Florida's east coast free from offshore drilling and maintaining the Department of Interior's commitment to remove Florida from consideration in the next draft of the proposed leasing plan.
- **OPPOSE** any legislation that moves the ban to an earlier date.

Appropriations

- White House officials said this week that the President planned to sign a funding package covering energy, military construction, veterans affairs, and legislative branch programs.
- The House next week is set to vote on a Senate-passed measure to fund defense, labor, health and education programs. That package contains a continuing resolution to fund remaining federal programs through Dec. 7.

- During the week of Sept. 10, Congress passed the final [conference report](#) for the \$147 billion FY 2019 Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act ([H.R. 5895](#)),

ACTION

- **SUPPORT** adequate funding for the following program areas:
 - Corps of Engineers funds: Everglades restoration, port and inlet construction and maintenance, and beach nourishment
 - Community Development Block Grant program
 - Community Services Block Grant program
 - Social Services Block Grant program
 - Economic Development Administration
 - State Criminal Alien Assistance Program

2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE

2018-19 FEDERAL POLICY PRIORITIES

**Changes/additions are underlined*

1. NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Reform: **SUPPORT** reauthorization of the NFIP with legislative, policy and programmatic modifications to ensure no coverage lapses and to improve the affordability, transparency and financial stability of the program through reforms in the following areas: 1) Affordability/Rate Structure; 2) Mapping/Data Collection/Modeling; and, 3) Mitigation. **OPPOSE** any reauthorization efforts that are detrimental to policyholders, local governments and the integrity of the program. **SUPPORT** the Sustainable, Affordable, Fair and Efficient National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (SAFE NFIP) 2017.

2. WATER

Comprehensive Water Policy: *TBD – FAC staff is working to determine policy statement language and action items.*

Water Resources Development Act: **SUPPORT** bi-annual passage of the Water Resources Development Act that authorizes Corps of Engineers projects and policies that often have state-wide impacts to Florida, including Everglades restoration, port and inlet construction, and beach nourishment projects. **SUPPORT** restoration of congressionally directed spending.

3. OPIOIDS

Opioid Funding: **SUPPORT** providing life-saving interventions, medically-assisted detoxification programs, and diversions from the criminal justice system for those suffering from opioid addiction. **SUPPORT** efforts to stop international and interstate opioid trafficking and increased penalties for dealers and traffickers whose actions result in loss of life. **SUPPORT** federal assistance for first responders to carry naloxone to treat suspected overdoses. **SUPPORT** eliminating the Institute of Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion provision that limits the number of Medicaid-funded beds available for substance abuse treatment.

4. DISASTER RECOVERY

De-obligation: **SUPPORT** legislation that prohibits the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from de-obligating from counties previously-awarded disaster funds for projects that have been certified complete by the state for at least three years. Additionally, **SUPPORT** changes to the Stafford Act that will ensure counties are not denied a disaster project appeal by FEMA, whenever the state, while serving as the grantee, fails to meet the regulatory timeline for project appeals.

Recovery and Preparedness: SUPPORT increased investment in mitigation programs such as the Pre-disaster Mitigation Program, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and other partnerships between local and federal governments to complete mitigation projects and increase resiliency to disasters. **OPPOSE** programmatic changes that would increase the local cost share for disaster recovery, such as the implementation of a disaster deductible.

5. OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING

FAC **SUPPORTS** the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA), which bans oil and gas leasing within 125 miles off Florida's Gulf Coast until 2022 and **OPPOSES** any legislation that moves the ban to an earlier date. FAC meanwhile **SUPPORTS** keeping Florida's east coast free from offshore drilling and maintaining the Department of Interior's commitment to remove Florida from consideration in the next draft of the proposed leasing plan.

6. APPROPRIATIONS for Programs of Significant Importance

- Corps of Engineers – funding for Everglades restoration, port and inlet construction and maintenance, and beach nourishment
- Community Development Block Grant program
- Community Services Block Grant program
- Social Services Block Grant program
- Economic Development Administration
- State Criminal Alien Assistance Program



FED-1: Veteran Homelessness

FAC Staff Recommendation: Adopt
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Proposed Policy: SUPPORT legislation ensuring that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) supported housing program has at least one program manager for every 35 rental assistance cases under such program.

Issue Summary: The HUD-VASH program is a joint program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist homeless veterans in finding permanent housing. S. 2750, filed by Senators Nelson and Rubio, would protect and improve the program by ensuring that funding is available and requiring that the program have not fewer than one program manager for every 35 rental assistance cases.

Background: Palm Beach County is experiencing a growing amount of veteran homelessness. In a recent mandated point-in-time count, Palm Beach County's volunteers recorded 1,308 homeless persons and families during a 24-hour period Jan. 25 and 26. The 2017 point-in-time count recorded 1,607. The count also showed a 73.3 percent increase in homeless veterans.

Analysis: S. 2750 requires the Secretary of the VA to ensure that the supported housing program of the VA has not fewer than one program manager for every 35 rental assistance cases under such program, and for other purposes. The bill would create the 'Preserving Our Commitment to Homeless Veterans Act.' The Secretary should provide case management support requested by the local housing authority under the supported housing program.

Fiscal Impact: Potential increase in staffing

2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE

FED-2: Infrastructure

FAC Staff Recommendation: Adopt

Proposed Policy: SUPPORT federal legislation that ensures funding for locally-owned infrastructure, preserves the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds, streamlines the federal permitting process, promotes innovative financing, and ensures the long-term certainty and solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

Issue Summary:

- Distribution of disaster supplemental funds should not be delayed
- Funds appropriated for key programs to Florida should not be rescinded
- Preserve tax-exempt status of municipal bonds
- Bring long-term certainty and solvency to highway trust fund
- Establish dedicated funding for local infrastructure

Background:

Counties play a critical role in the nation's transportation system, owning 46 percent of all public roads (compared to the 32 percent of public roads owned by cities and townships, 19 percent by states, and 3 percent by the federal government) and 38 percent of the nation's bridge inventory. In Florida, counties own and maintain more than **70,400 miles of roads**, which includes more than 14,800 miles of unpaved roads.

Florida counties face increasingly large infrastructure funding shortfalls. A report by the Florida Center for Urban and Transportation Research (CUTR)¹, estimates that, over the next twenty years, our Metropolitan Planning Areas will face a \$126 billion shortfall for transportation needs. Annualized statewide, the shortfall is approximately \$6.32 billion per year. To maintain this system, Florida counties spend most of their transportation budgets (approximately 86%) on maintenance alone, leaving little capacity for capital improvements.

From a funding standpoint, counties have been responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. They are increasingly required to do more with less, which has forced them to be both efficient and innovative when it comes planning, building, and maintaining local infrastructure. As evidence of this, of the \$2 billion that Florida counties spent on roads in 2016, more than 41% (\$839.4

¹ *A review of MPO Long Range Transportation Plans and Estimate of Statewide 2035 Metropolitan Area Financial Shortfall.* (April 2013). Center for Urban and Transportation Research.

million) was subsidized with non-fuel tax revenues to ensure their networks function effectively. What this means, however, is that a very large funding gap for roads exists at the county level.

In addition to road infrastructure, counties continue to make major investments in other transportation modes to support our state's economy. Specifically, for FY 2016, counties spent more than \$1.19 billion on mass transit, \$1.098 billion on airports, \$283 million on water transportation, and another 199 million on other modes. On average, Florida counties spent 206.27 per capita on transportation needs.

Funding for infrastructure, of course, extends beyond transportation. County investments in waste water, environmental infrastructure, and solid waste are significant but must compete for other local funding priorities. For these reasons, any Federal infrastructure funding plan should consider the needs and resource limitations of counties.

More specifically, the Florida Association of Counties recommends that future policy decision reflect the following:

- **Preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds.** Though legislated as part of the tax code through the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, tax-exempt bonds are a critical tool for counties that facilitates the budgeting and financing of long-range investments in the infrastructure and facilities necessary to meet public demand. Without the tax-exemption, counties would pay more to raise capital, a cost that would ultimately be borne by the taxpayers through means such as reduced spending on the roads and bridges that counties are responsible for, decreased economic development, higher taxes or higher user fees.
- **Promote long-term solvency of the highway trust fund.** To maintain a robust infrastructure network, the Highway Trust Fund must remain solvent. FAC advocates for an "all tools in the toolbox" approach to accomplishing this, including increased usage of user-fees for infrastructure.
- **New, dedicated federal funding must be part of any new infrastructure package:** While FAC supports public-private partnerships (P3s) for project development, it is important that any infrastructure package provide funding to those parts of the country where private investment is not appropriate. A robust rural infrastructure plan must be part of any new legislation with the necessary funds to address their unique needs.

Fiscal Impact:

Potential significant positive impact on counties.

Resolution No. 18-001

**Board of Directors
Florida Association of Counties, Inc.**

A RESOLUTION OF THE FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES, INC., REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE INSIST THAT ANY FINAL MODIFICATIONS ON THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA) INCLUDE STRONG PROVISIONS TO PROTECT FLORIDA'S SPECIALTY CROP INDUSTRY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, according to the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, Florida's agriculture industry produces more than 400 crops that generate \$155 billion in annual sales revenue and support more than 1.5 million jobs; and

WHEREAS, Florida is one of the Nation's leading producers of fruits and vegetables, supporting 100,000 jobs and with an economic impact of more than \$12 billion a year; and

WHEREAS, specialty crops that are seasonal and perishable in nature are a significant component of Florida's agricultural industry; and

WHEREAS, our nation's agricultural trade deficit with Mexico exceeds \$5.3 billion per year, most of which is in the fruits and vegetable sector; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs estimates that the growth in seasonal and perishable sector imports from Mexico, and Mexico's crop subsidies and illegal seasonal dumping of produce, results in losses to Florida of between \$1 billion and \$3 billion per year; and

WHEREAS, trade data shows there are eight specialty crops in Florida (avocados, bell peppers, blueberries, cucumbers, squash, strawberries, tomatoes and watermelons) that are most impacted by Mexico's unfair trade practices; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 114-26, The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (TPAA) requires that U.S. trade agreements "eliminate

practices that adversely affect trade in perishable or cyclical products, while improving import relief mechanisms to recognize the unique characteristics of perishable and cyclical agriculture”; and

WHEREAS, a bipartisan group Florida’s Congressional delegation, including Representatives Bilirakis, Buchanan, Curbelo, Diaz-Balart, Dunn, Lawson, Mast, Murphy, Rooney, Ros-Lehtinen, Ross, Soto, Wilson, and Yoho, in a letter dated August 23, 2018, urged the United State Trade Representative to continue to advocate for inclusion of provisions to protect Florida’s specialty crop industry; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of seasonal crop farmers have announced that they will not be planting crops this year; and

WHEREAS, the Association’s Federal Committee debated this proposed resolution during two of its meetings and, at its meeting on September 27, 2018, recommended that the Board of Directors support this resolution; and

WHEREAS, time is of the essence to communicate the Board of Directors’ request to the United State Trade Representative but the Legislative Executive Committee and the full membership will not vote on the Association’s Federal Committee recommendations until late November, 2018; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors is empowered to bind the Association on policy positions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES, INC.:

SECTION 1. REQUEST. The Board of Directors of the Florida Association of Counties, Inc., hereby requests that the United States Trade Representative ensure that any final NAFTA agreement with Mexico adheres to the requirements of the TPAA (Public Law 114-26) and includes strong and enforceable provisions that are meant to protect Florida and U.S. specialty crop farmers from unfair trade practices, subsidies and illegal dumping by Mexico and Mexican farmers.

SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This resolution shall be effective as of the date of its adoption, as affixed below.

ADOPTED AND PASSED, this 28th day of September, 2018.

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES, INC.

KARSON TURNER, PRESIDENT

Attest:

Virginia "Ginger" Delegal
Executive Director

2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 23, 2018

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer,

With reports that the Administration is seeking to conclude negotiations with Mexico as part of an updated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the end of this month, we are urging you to continue to advocate for inclusion of provisions to protect Florida's specialty crop industry. NAFTA has been a great success for many industries in Florida, but it is important to address the challenges it has presented for the specialty crop industry.

As you know, an unprecedented growth in imports from Mexico as a result of its unfair subsidies and illegal seasonal dumping is having a devastating impact on farmers in our home state and throughout the Southeast. Because we share a similar growing season and produce many of the same specialty crops as Mexico, Florida producers have been particularly hard hit. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Florida has experienced a loss of between \$1 billion and \$3 billion dollars a year since 2000. As the Administration has widely recognized, the seasonal and perishable sectors in the Southeast have suffered disproportionately under the original NAFTA.

It is absolutely critical that any final agreement must allow our fruit and vegetable growers to address the challenges they face from unfairly traded imports. We support the U.S. proposal to use seasonal data to seek regional relief in anti-dumping and countervailing duty cases because we need to provide this sector with the necessary tools to make the case that that Mexico is selling produce at unfairly low prices when certain crops are in season in a particular region.

Since 2002 and as recently as 2015 through Trade Priority and Accountability Act (TPAA), Congress has instructed our trade negotiators to improve our trade laws to "recognize the unique characteristics of perishable and cyclical agriculture; and ensure that import relief mechanisms for perishable and cyclical agriculture are as accessible and timely to growers in the United States." As noted in a recent letter to your office from a wide range of produce associations, "until the seasonality reforms being called for under TPAA are instituted, our producers in the Southeast will have no means of securing relief against the onslaught of unfair Mexican prices during our annual marketing periods."

Similarly, the American Farm Bureau Federation has also stressed that "Any new NAFTA agreement must modernize U.S. mechanisms to provide relief against the onslaught of seasonal fruit and vegetable production in Mexico." Even more concerning, in a recent letter to President Trump, Mexico's president-elect indicated that Mexico intends to substantially

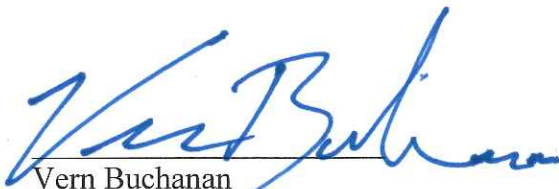
increase its subsidies and "allocate significant resources" to the "reactivation" of its agriculture sector. With an existing \$5 billion agricultural trade deficit with Mexico, nearly all of which is in the fruit and vegetable sector, we cannot afford to wait any longer to address these unfair trade practices and mounting Mexican imports.

Florida is one of the leading producers of fruits and vegetables in the country, and the sector is absolutely critical to our state economy because it supports nearly 100,000 jobs and has an economic impact of more than \$12 billion a year. While we grow the highest quality produce in the world and can compete in the global marketplace, our industry is hurting and in need of access to adequate trade remedies that are accorded to every other sector in the U.S.

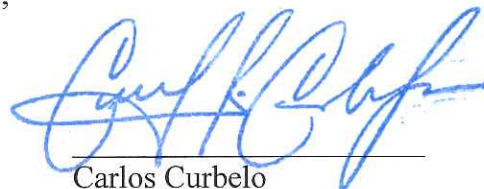
As President Trump stressed in his July 31 speech in Florida, with farmers suffering from unfair trading practices, now is the time to strengthen NAFTA. Again, thank you for your efforts to modernize NAFTA while protecting our specialty crop industry. We urge your steadfast commitment to ensuring these vital trade remedies are included in any final NAFTA agreement.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this critically important matter and we look forward to your response.

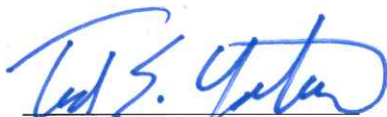
Sincerely,



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



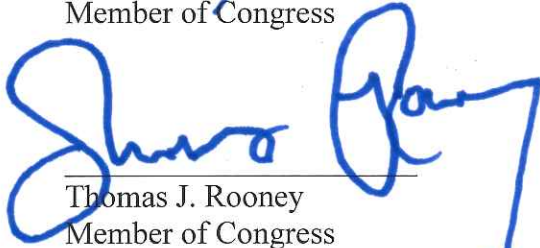
Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Ted Yoho, D.V.M.
Member of Congress



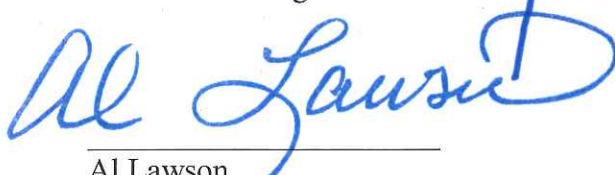
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



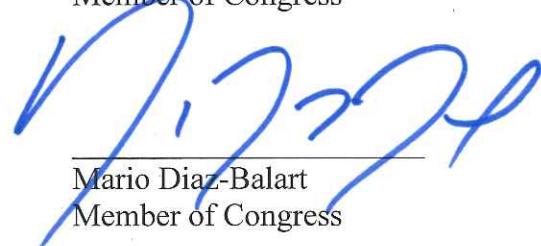
Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress




Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress



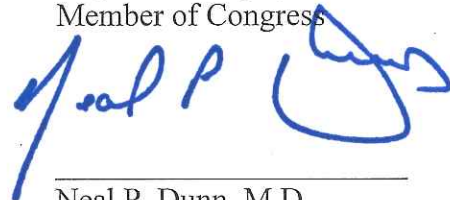
Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress

2018 INNOVATION & POLICY CONFERENCE

The Importance of Including Trade-Remedy Reforms for Seasonal and Perishable Agriculture in any US-Mexico Trade Deal

- We understand the Administration is seeking to conclude an agreement with Mexico in August, and as such it is critically important that seasonal produce provision, as proposed by United States negotiators be included in any agreement to ensure the future sustainability of Florida agriculture producers and growers of seasonal produce throughout the county.
- As you know, the United States has a \$5 billion trade deficit with Mexico in agriculture, nearly all of which is in perishable fruits and vegetables.
- Because NAFTA failed to fix certain shortcomings in our trade laws, the Mexican fruits and vegetables flooding into the US market are being sold at unfairly dumped and subsidized prices, which our seasonal producers have not viable trade remedies. As such, our producers are being driven out of business by this NAFTA omission.
- Since 2002, and as updated in 2015, Congress has mandated under Trade Promotion Authority that our trade laws be fixed to allow perishable sectors in Florida and the Southeast to bring an import relief case if they can prove unfair Mexican trading practices.
- Consistent with your commitment to protecting our hard-working farmers against unfair trading practices, that seasonal-produce mandate would just give our injured US sectors the means to proving unfair trade.
- While U.S. negotiators have been steadfast advocating for this trade remedy, but Mexico has resisted.
- In fact, Mexico's President-elect just made clear in his recent letter to President Trump that *Mexico intends to substantially increase subsidies to its fruits sectors*. His letter states that Mexico will dedicate substantially more public funding to "reactivate" its agricultural sector, including by "planting a million hectares of fruit."
- Mexico's plan to increase its unfair fruit and vegetable practices by many multiples has only increased the urgent need for this seasonality provision.
- For a renegotiated NAFTA to be acceptable and succeed in delivering more jobs and higher wages for our produce sector, we need a seasonal provision that complies with TPAA and helps stop Mexico from pushing our Florida and Southeastern fruit and vegetable farmers out of business with unfair practices.
- Your support in maintaining this important reform included in any US-Mexico deal is greatly appreciated.

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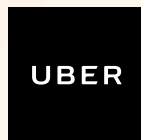


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A sunburst graphic with numerous rays of varying lengths and widths, all originating from a single point at the top center and radiating outwards. The rays are colored in shades of orange and yellow, creating a warm, glowing effect.

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Floridians by strengthening and preserving
county home rule through
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