



# NEWSLETTER

From the Office of State Representative  
**José Javier Rodríguez**

**Florida House District 112**

*End of Session 2016*



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## ***Friends and neighbors,***

The 2016 legislative Session in Tallahassee concluded earlier this month and after several months advocating for us in Tallahassee I am back home and working in the District. Below are some examples of the legislation I've been working on this session. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you would like to discuss these topics or anything else.

### ***Working together in Tallahassee for Miami's benefit***

As Vice-Chair of the Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation, I am happy to report a productive 2016 Session for the Miami area and was proud to work with Chair Rep. Diaz, J. (R-Miami) and other colleagues on a number of important initiatives for the Miami area. The bills we advanced addressed a number of critical concerns, including; creating a pilot program to reduce the rates of HIV and Hepatitis C infection (SB 242, HB 81); revising school funding procedures that had shortchanged our local public schools out of millions of dollars in funding (SB 766, HB 499); and one finally removing discriminatory barriers that prevented legally residing immigrant children from obtaining health insurance.

We also worked together to secure funding for the cleanup of the **Miami River**, for safety repairs to the 3d District Court of Appeals building, for the completion of two linear parks, **The Underline and The Ludlum Trail**, and other items important to our community.



*Rep. Rodriguez convening a meeting with the Dept. of Transportation to work on roadway improvements benefiting residents of the Golden Pines neighborhood with Miami Commrs. Suarez & Russell and County Commr. Suarez*



*Rep. Rodriguez giving closing remarks on his bill protecting victims of domestic violence passed into law this year*



*Rep Rodriguez providing a legislative update to his neighbors at the Miami Shenandoah Neighborhood Association*



*Rep. Rodriguez explaining to the media how environmental damage caused by the Turkey Point nuclear plant will impact his constituents at a press conference calling for action from state and federal agencies*

### ***Advocating for the public on failures at Turkey point***

**My efforts to champion the public interest with respect to the operation of the Turkey Point nuclear facility have increased in recent weeks.** Following evidence of impacts to water quality, the environment and future drinking water supplies, I have advocated for state regulators to take immediate action and have been in contact with federal regulators about taking a direct role in protecting the public. A recent New York Times article titled "[Nuclear Plant Leak Threatens Drinking Water Wells](#)" describes the current situation at Turkey Point. Please contact my office if you would like more information.



Rep. Rodriguez meeting with visitors from home at the Capitol, former House Speaker Dick Pettigrew, Coral Gables Commissioner Patricia Keon and County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa



Rep. Rodriguez presenting HB 931 along with Rep. Passidomo (R-Naples), a bill seeking to protect Citizens Insurance policyholders from take-out companies



Rep. Rodriguez and his wife Sonia joining neighbors at "Shenandoah Day"



Rep. Rodriguez working with advocates to seek state support for The Underline



Rep. Rodriguez conferring with Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent & Board Members at the Capitol

Moving forward I hope that we can build on the cooperation we achieved. It is important for us as local legislators to have strategic plans for our area that look into the future rather than focus on each year independently.

### ***Responsible budgeting and tax reduction***

Every year I have served in the House of Representatives I have worked to increase the share of state dollars in base education funding relative to local dollars; I have done so because of a tendency, in my view, of the Legislature to shift financial responsibility off of state monies and onto local property taxpayers. **This year for the first time the budget included \$428 million extra for local schools specifically in order to avoid relying heavily on increased local property taxes to increase education funding; I was very pleased to have been a part of helping to make that happen.**

I opposed the Governor's plans to greatly increase the amount of taxpayer money spent on tax credits and subsidies to private industry through programs administered by Enterprise Florida. I do not believe these programs have produced sufficient results and that they need greater oversight. For that reason, I was pleased that the Governor's request of \$250 million for industry subsidies was not funded this year.

There are other measures in this year's budget that I was happy to support. We included more than \$11 million to reduce the number of senior citizens waiting for services from state programs to keep them healthy and, in many cases, in their own homes. We also committed \$200 million for the restoration of the Everglades and natural springs, vital to our water supply and economy.

### ***Promoting Community Safety***

**The Legislature passed a bill I sponsored to help law enforcement better protect victims of domestic violence and stalking (HB 101, SB 380).** Together with advocates for the bill, Senate sponsor Sen. Joseph Abruzzo (D-Wellington) and I worked hard on the bill for two years so I was pleased to see this important bill pass.

This year the Legislature also passed a bill reforming the death penalty after the United States Supreme Court struck down Florida's death penalty process (HB 7101, SB 7068). While I was disappointed that it took a Supreme Court decision to get the Legislature to take action, I was happy to have been heavily involved in the reform process over the last three years and believe the reforms passed this year make our death penalty more fair and reliable and less likely to be struck down in the future.

### ***Advocating for homeowners and neighborhoods***

In my time as a State Representative I have advocated for residential neighborhoods in the City of Miami with a high density of assisted living facilities (ALFs). **This year we passed a proposal I developed last year with Rep. Avila (R-Hialeah); it strengthens distance restrictions between ALFs located in residential neighborhoods to help cities enforce neighborhood-friendly density requirements (HB 885, SB 1174).**

Rep. Passidomo (R-Naples) and I **co-sponsored a bill that protects Citizens Insurance policyholders from take-out companies (HB 931, SB 1630).** Local 10 News explained the bill in a report called "[Bill offering consumer protections for Citizens policyholders passed.](#)" While more modest than a similar bill vetoed by the Governor last year, it requires Citizens to provide clearer information about take-out companies to policyholders, protects the confidentiality of customer information and limits the times during which take-outs can occur to a periodic schedule.

This year I was also pleased to support a **proposed ballot initiative protecting low-income seniors** who are long-term residents in their home (HB 275 & 277). It would enable them to keep a Homestead exemption many are at risk of losing.



*Rep. Rodriguez assisting two students of closed for-profit college Mattia College to explain their experiences & call for reforms in the for-profit college industry*



*Rep. Rodriguez meeting with members of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation*



*Rep. Rodriguez joining Miami Firefighters and others at the Martin Luther King Day Parade*



*Rep. Rodriguez leading legislative colleagues in honoring four Brothers to the Rescue pilots, marking the 20th anniversary of their shoot-down by the Cuban government*



*Rep. Rodriguez helping distribute food at an event co-organized with Farm Share, joined by volunteers from Miami Dade College and the City of Miami*

## *Advocating for our students*

As in prior years I continue to advocate for greater oversight of for-profit colleges and stronger consumer protections for the students they enroll. For the first time this year a reform bill by Rep. Plakon (HB 1053), similar in spirit to a bill I filed (HB 123), received a hearing in the House of Representatives. It, unfortunately, was stalled in the House Educations Appropriations Subcommittee.

## *Protecting our state and our natural resources*

I was pleased that a bill allowing the oil and gas extraction technique known as “fracking” failed in the Senate this year (HB 191). I believe the practice threatens public health and will harm our economy. I sponsored a proposed Constitutional amendment banning “fracking” altogether (HJR 453) and have been outspoken on the issue.

House Bill 989, passed this year, provides a dedicated and stable funding source to complete projects restoring and protecting our Everglades and estuaries, critical to our water supply, way of life and economy in South Florida. I was happy to work with bill sponsor Rep. Harrell (R-Stuart) and support the bill.

In an effort to encourage state government to address the effects of sea level rise and climate change, I worked with Rep. Jacobs (D-Coconut Creek) on a bill (HB 1223) requiring state agencies to coordinate information and efforts addressing the consequences of sea level rise such as extreme weather events. The bill was unsuccessful but my efforts at addressing the effects of sea level rise will continue.

## *Raising ethical standards in government*

A bill that significantly improves the state's ability to prosecute cases of public corruption is now law (HB 7071). I was also happy to co-sponsor a bill by Rep. Metz (R-Groveland) that would have increased government accountability and reporting requirements on lobbying activity, though disappointed that it did not pass this year (HB 593, SB 686).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance. It is a pleasure to serve as your Representative.

Sincerely,



Rep. Rodriguez working with volunteers at a Citizenship Clinic he co-hosted in the District



Rep. Rodriguez meeting with advocates of immigrant families visiting the Capitol



Rep. Rodriguez meeting with members of AMIKids of Miami-Dade, a non-profit youth organization



Rep. Rodriguez advocating clean energy policies with Miami Mayor Regalado, Pinecrest Mayor Lerner, South Miami Mayor Stoddard, Cutler Bay Mayor Bell, Palmetto Bay Mayor Flinn, Key Biscayne Mayor Peña-Lindsey & County Commissioner Cava Levine



Rep. Rodriguez joining Archbishop Thomas Wenski for Catholic Days at the Capitol