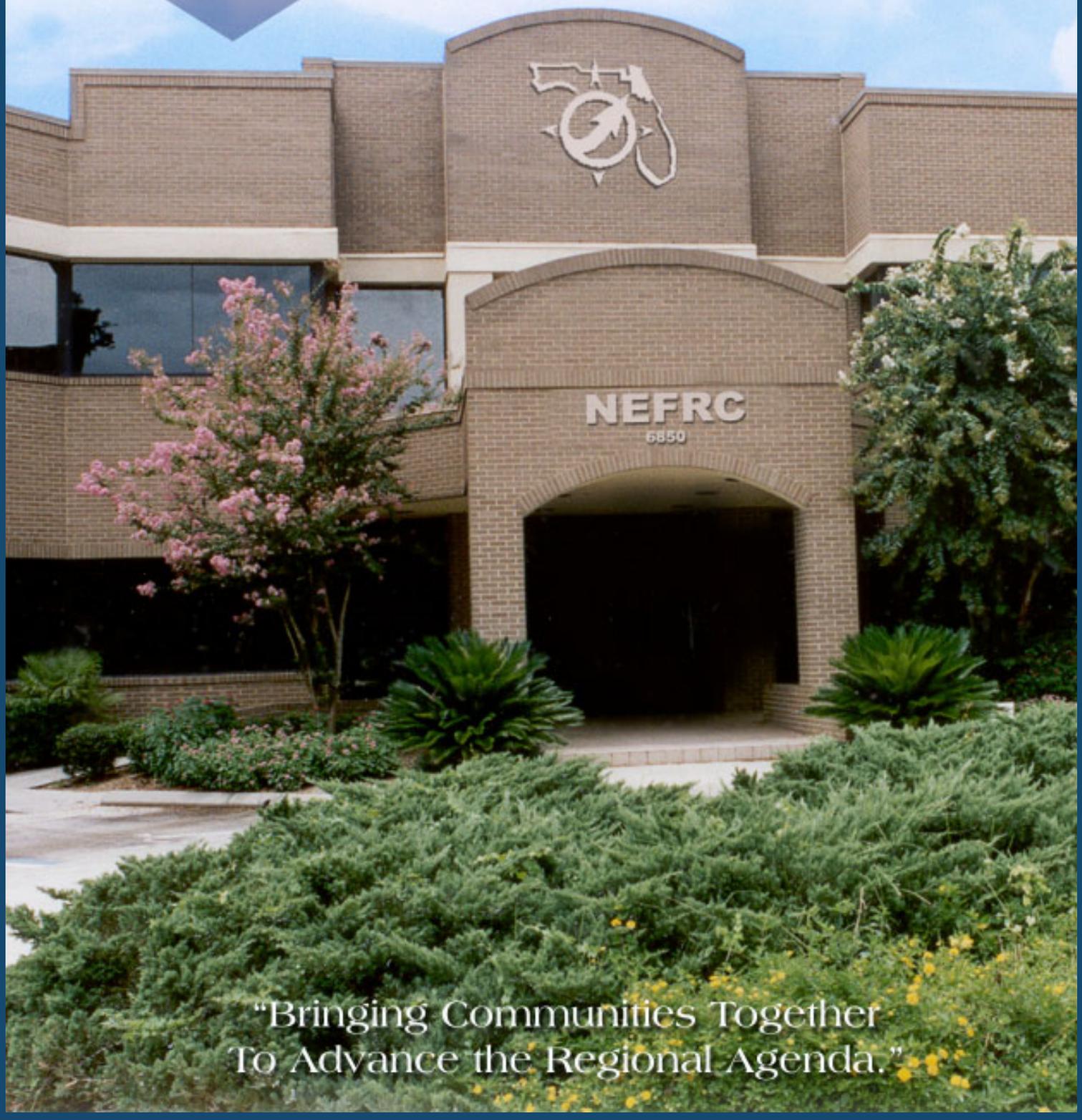


2006

Northeast Florida Regional Council **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**



Baker ■ Clay ■ Duval ■ Flagler ■ Nassau ■ Putnam ■ St. Johns Counties



“Bringing Communities Together
To Advance the Regional Agenda.”

2006

Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities

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Committee Purpose:

"Work collectively and promote regionally."

Committee Philosophy:

This committee is guided by the Home Rule Philosophy to develop and implement community-based solutions.

Committee Responsibilities:

To serve as the forum for the Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors to collect its local governments' legislative priorities to promote a regional agenda.



"Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda"

2006 Legislative Priorities of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

Affordable/Workforce Housing

- ✓ Return full funding of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program.
- ✓ Oppose any legislation, through Local Option Portability, that supports portability amendments that will allow Florida homeowners to take their property tax protection with them if they buy another home.
- ✓ Preserve dedicated funding for the State and Local Government Housing Trust Fund.

Emergency Preparedness & Recovery

- ✓ Support the increase in shelters that will assist residents and evacuees in the case of a hurricane, which includes support and funding of multiple efforts which address the specific needs of the elderly in times of disaster relief and recovery.
- ✓ Enhance financial resources for local recovery efforts.
- ✓ Support the Governor's Coastal High Hazards Study Committee recommendations for managing growth in Coastal High Hazard Areas, which are defined as the Category 1 hurricane evacuation zones.

Transportation Funding

- ✓ Support continuation of monies generated by statewide gas tax collections to the State Transportation Trust Fund to ensure essential transportation programs such as the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) are fully funded.
- ✓ Support replenishment of the Transportation Trust Fund for at least \$1 billion of surplus state revenue; further support directing these funds into the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).
- ✓ Enhance financial resources for local transportation improvements.

Medicaid Funding

- ✓ Support legislation requiring the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to reimburse counties the amount of mandated contributions when AHCA recovers Medicaid costs from liable third parties.
- ✓ Decrease the County's fiscal share of Medicaid cost to reduce the disproportionate impact which has become overly burdensome on small counties.
- ✓ Oppose efforts to undermine local systems that provide transportation for the disadvantaged by allowing Medicaid HMOs to provide alternative transportation to selected clients, reducing efficiency and funding.

KidCare Funding

- ✓ Maintain current funding levels in KidCare, maximizing federal support.
- ✓ Support the provision of funding for outreach in local communities to assist parents in program enrollment.

BAKER COUNTY

Legislative Priorities



√ Small County Road Programs

Background: The Small County Road Programs are critical to Baker County's transportation issues. The Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) were providing necessary transportation funding for continued road improvements.

Requested Action: Support continuation of monies generated by statewide gas tax collections to the State Transportation Trust Fund to ensure essential transportation programs such as the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) are fully funded.

Effect: Continuation of these vital programs will enable counties to resume much needed road improvements.

√ Return full funding of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program

Background: County SHIP funds were reduced in 2004 resulting in wait-listing and the subsequent cessation of application acceptance for this program.

Requested Action: Restore full funding of each County's SHIP allowance as projected prior to the reduction act.

Effect: Restoration of maximum SHIP fund amounts will immediately increase the number of individuals receiving SHIP assistance. Full funding will also reduce the current waiting lists which are approximately 100 requesting Home Repair and 75 requesting Home Purchase.

√ Hurricane Preparedness and Response Funds

Background: Baker County has only two shelters that will assist residences and evacuees in the case of a hurricane. We would like to tap into the \$565 million proposed funds for Hurricane Preparedness and Response proposed by the Governor and Lt. Governor, to build a new Council on Aging facility that would not only help our Senior Citizens but also provide adequate shelter for them and their pets. Seniors are attached to their animals and having a shelter that will provide for them and their pets, they are more likely to seek shelter than stay at home with their animals. This facility will also provide shelter to other surrounding counties in the area in case of a major hurricane.

Requested Action: Support the funding for Hurricane Relief and Preparedness and help the small counties to be able to tap into this funding for preparing the senior citizens in case of a major hurricane in the state.

Effect: Will provide a multi-purpose building for our senior citizens and also provide a shelter for evacuee's and their pets in the event of a major hurricane.

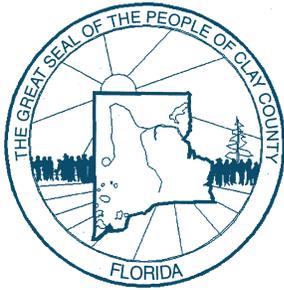
√ County Medicaid Responsibilities

Background: Medicaid costs continue to mount for counties, and small counties are hit particularly hard due to serious consequences when low countywide taxable value is coupled with a high rate of Medicaid eligibility of the county's population. This ever-increasing percentage of the County's Medicaid eligible population is due to influx from neighboring counties where the cost of living is greater.

Requested Action: Oppose legislation increasing the county share of nursing home and inpatient hospital costs.

Effect: Legislation that reduces inpatient hospital cost by limiting the county responsibility to only the 13th-45th day of hospital coverage.

Legislation requiring the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to reimburse counties the amount of mandated contributions when AHCA recovers Medicaid costs from liable third parties.



CLAY COUNTY

Legislative Priorities

✓ County Medicaid Responsibilities

Background: Medicaid costs continue to mount for counties, and small counties are hit particularly hard due to serious consequences when low countywide taxable value is coupled with a high rate of Medicaid eligibility of the county's population. Florida has required counties to contribute financially to the Medicaid program, subsidizing the state's share. This current policy leaves counties vulnerable each year to potential cost shifts when there is a state budget deficit or shortfall.

Requested Action: Oppose legislation increasing the county share of nursing home and inpatient hospital costs.

Support legislation requiring the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to reimburse counties the amount of mandated contributions when AHCA recovers Medicaid costs from liable third parties.

Support the state's efforts in opposing changes to the funding formula for the Medicaid program between the federal and state government that would reduce the federal share to Florida.

Support legislation that allows the state to finance and promote the objectives of the Medicaid program without shifting additional costs to county government.

Support efforts to impose additional costs on local government to compensate for lost federal funding, if intergovernmental transfers are disallowed by the federal government.

Effect: Decreasing the County's fiscal share of Medicaid cost will reduce the disproportionate impact which has become overly burdensome on small counties.

✓ Local Option Portability

Background: Citizens across the state are being asked to support a constitutional amendment that would allow a county, subject to voter approval, to adopt an ordinance that allows a homeowner to transfer the Save Our Homes assessment differential, up to \$250,000, from one homestead property that is sold to another homestead property in Florida purchased within one year. This would allow homeowners to transfer the same percent of protection from one property to another, but only if buying within the same county. The homeowner would take the taxable amount with him/her and pay taxes on the lower amount. Our county depends on the revenue generated by property values.

Requested Action: Oppose any legislation that supports portability amendments that will allow Florida homeowners to take their property tax protection with them if they buy another home.

Effect: Gives the homeowners a tax break and it restricts revenue for the local taxing agency, forcing the local agency to seek alternative revenue sources. This is a direct attack on home rule; removing current authority from the local taxing agency.

✓ Transportation Funding

Background: Rapid growth in Florida continues to result in increasing traffic congestion, affecting the quality of life of residents and dampening economic development prospects. Florida's current growth rate is double that of the national rate, which will make it the 3rd most populous state by 2010, behind California and Texas. Around 900 new residents move to the state every day and by 2025 the state is forecast to have a population of 25.5 million. The state is also becoming more urbanized, with more than 90% of the state's population living in metropolitan areas.

Requested Action: Support replenishment of the Transportation Trust Fund for at least one billion dollars of surplus state revenue. Further support directing these funds into the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP).

Effect: In the face of spiraling construction costs and reduced transportation funding for counties, replenishment of the Transportation Trust Fund will reduce traffic congestion and spur economic development throughout the state.

DUVAL COUNTY

Legislative Priorities



✓ St. Johns River - Lower Basin

Background: Currently, the amount of nutrients in the lower St. Johns River exceeds what the river can receive and still maintain its health. The condition of the river was accentuated this summer with the proliferation of harmful algal blooms. Effluent from industrial and wastewater treatment plants is the largest nutrient contributor, with additional contribution from agricultural sources and stormwater from urban and suburban areas. Failing septic systems in tributaries leading to the main stem are also a major problem.

Requested Action: The city requests support of the Community Budget Initiative Request (CBIR) submitted by Senator Jim King and Representative Joe Pickens for \$20 million for the lower St. Johns River.

Effect: The urgent need to address our river's health has resulted in a partnership between the City of Jacksonville, JEA, and the St. Johns River Water Management District to identify, rank and fund priority projects. It is the goal of this partnership to develop a true long-range plan that involves a comprehensive river restoration strategy that includes wastewater upgrades, urban stormwater retrofits and elimination of failing septic systems. Increased state participation in this effort is essential.

✓ Transportation Funding and Equity

Background: Local governments continue to struggle to address infrastructure shortfalls created by rapid growth throughout the state. Last year's passage of a new growth management law, SB 360, was important for several reasons. Perhaps most important was the linkage between managing growth and funding infrastructure. The bill provided important one-time and recurring funds for roads, water supply and schools. To the extent that additional funds are available for roads, the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) is the preferred program, since it leverages local resources and helps address road needs created by the shifting of more state funds to the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS).

Requested Action: Support increased funding for transportation through programs like the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP). Support provision of long-term equity under the "need-based" Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) that preserves the ability of FDOT to pursue major projects. Specific recommendation is that the district allocation of funding under the SIS should be at least 90% of the district allocation provided for under the formula-based programs over a 10-year period.

Effect: By placing reasonable formula goals in the SIS, it will ensure that commuters in one part of the state are not unfairly asked to subsidize those in other regions.

✓ Affordable Housing

Background: The affordable/workforce housing problems in Duval County mirror those of other cities and counties in Florida. While funding from the state is anticipated to be a net increase for the '06-'07 fiscal funding year, the local situation will worsen due to an increase in demand and a decrease in federal funding.

Requested Action: Elimination of the cap on funds collected through the Sadowski Act allowing passage of new programs for would-be homeowners; or increased funding to counties and cities to meet their individual affordable housing needs.

Effect: This year, the Jacksonville Housing Commission has received over 65 funding requests for over \$25M, yet Duval County is set to receive less than \$15M in funds from state and federal sources to meet these identified demands.



2006 FLAGLER COUNTY Legislative Priorities

√ Road Widening and Interstate I-95 Interchange

Background: The bulk of Flagler County's population is north of S.R. 100 and east of U.S. 1, which means the concentration of traffic is at the Palm Coast Parkway Interchange. As Flagler County continues to grow (it is currently the fastest growing county in the Nation) the necessity for more interstate overpasses and interstate connection becomes vital.

Requested Action: Support the widening of CR 305 from the Flagler-Volusia county line to CR 304. Support for \$5.9 million to be included in the FDOT work plan for the widening of Palm Coast Parkway between Boulder Rock Drive and Florida Park Drive.

Effect: Road widening would improve the traffic flow and accommodate the excessive amount of school buses and logging trucks that frequent this crowded road. Additionally, it would address Flagler County's growth issue in regard to the necessity for easier evacuation to save lives as needed in past history (the devastating fires in 1985 and 1998).

√ Qualified Target Industry (QTI)

Background: Attracting new industry to Florida to offset resident growth is important; in Flagler County it is vital. Clean industry with high paying jobs is needed to boost the economic growth and balance the burden of taxes in the county.

Requested Action: Revise Qualified Target Industry Statute (288.106) so it is not tied specifically to job creation. Allow QTI funds to be used for job retention as well as new jobs. Support the Small County Coalition recommendation to provide \$35 million to fund the program.

Effect: Flexibility in this statute will allow Flagler County to be competitive in attracting industry to the area and addressing the economic needs associated with tax burdens and residential growth.

√ Repeal Motor Fuel Marketing Practices Act

Background: The Motor Fuel Marketing Practices Act, passed in 1985, addressed worries that large retailers will sell gas at prices so low that they will drive smaller competitors out of the market. The law promotes competition by mandating a fixed, "below cost" level, under which a retail cannot sell gasoline.

Requested Action: Flagler County is joining forces with other entities to call for the repeal of the Motor Fuel Marketing Practices Act of 1985.

Effect: Gasoline prices will drop lower and have a less severe economic affect on Floridians.

NASSAU COUNTY

Legislative Priorities



√ Transportation Funding

- SR 200 / A1A for I-95 to the Intercoastal Waterway. Continue the design of A1A and the inclusion of funding for it in the Department of Transportation 5-year Work Program.
- Funding for CR 108 extension from Chester to US Highway 17.
- Senate Bill 360: numerous provisions including eliminating the provision to allow for "citizen challenges" of the capital improvement plans or to provide stricter requirements for a challenge; extending the time periods for Capital Improvement in Section 163.3180(16).

√ Medicaid Reform

- The state of Florida has required counties to contribute financially to the Medicaid program, subsidizing the state's share. This current policy leaves counties vulnerable each year to potential cost shifts when there is a state budget deficit or shortfall.
- Support the state's efforts in opposing changes to the funding formula for the Medicaid program between the federal and state government that would reduce the federal share to Florida.
- Support legislation that allows the state to finance and promote the objectives of the Medicaid program without shifting additional costs to county government.
- Support efforts to impose additional costs on local government to compensate for lost federal funding, if intergovernmental transfers are disallowed by the federal government.
- Decreasing the County's fiscal share of Medicaid cost will reduce the disproportionate impact which has become overly burdensome on small counties.

√ Emergency Preparedness

- Continued funding for the new Communications Systems for Fire and Rescue.



2006 PUTNAM COUNTY Legislative Priorities

√ Return full funding of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program

Background: County SHIP funds were reduced in 2004 resulting in the wait-listing and subsequent cessation of application acceptance for this affordable housing initiative.

Requested Action: Restore full funding of each county's SHIP allowance as projected prior to the reduction act.

Effect: Restoration of maximum SHIP fund amounts will immediately increase the number of individuals receiving housing assistance. Full funding will also reduce the current waiting list numbers which include those requesting home repair as well as home purchase.

√ Increase in Emergency Preparedness Provisions (Operations Centers/Trust Fund)

Background: Florida Statute 252 requires that each county within the state establish a primary and one or more secondary Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC is an integral part of effective management and response to local disasters and emergencies. Florida Statute 252.371 provides funds for Emergency Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund (EMPA) for an annual surcharge which is imposed on various homeowners. Eighty percent of these surcharges shall be allocated to local emergency management agencies. Of this 80 percent, at least 80 percent shall be allocated to counties.

Requested Action: Support additional funding for the pivotal project of increasing the amount of EOCs within the county. This should be addressed at the State and Federal levels. Sponsor and/or support legislation that the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association advocates which increases the funding amounts of this surcharge.

Effect: Will enable counties to construct the required facilities that serve as the brain centers of Emergency Support Functions. Will enable counties to receive increased funding to more effectively sustain and improve their emergency management programs.

√ Master Stormwater Plan Funding

Background: Putnam County has completed Phase I of a Master Stormwater Plan. A detailed engineering of individual drainage basins needs to be accomplished in Phase II.

Requested Action: Ensure funding will be available to match local dollar amounts necessary to implement component projects of the Plan to effect improvement drainage systems.

Effect: The Master Stormwater Plan will improve drainage systems and enhance water quality of the St. Johns River and its tributaries and other surface water bodies.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Legislative Priorities



√ Return full funding of the State Housing Partnership (SHIP) Program

Background: In the past, affordable housing was only a *local* issue requiring local resolution. However, now we are dealing with more than just a housing "inconvenience" it's a full blown crisis. It is estimated (by the Florida Housing Commission) that the 7 counties in Northeast Florida alone will need over 45,000 affordable housing units by 2010. The median price of a home, according to some statistical reports, is \$181,000. The average salary to afford a home of that cost is \$55,000. The average salaries of the working class resident who would purchase the home falls below the median range. Simply put, the ability to buy far exceeds the consumer's ability to pay.

Requested Action: Restore full funding of each county's State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) allowance as projected prior to the recent state level reductions. Examine other methods for addressing the funding of attainable housing.

Effect: The return of the "American Dream" of home ownership to Floridians. Our goal should be attainability for our residents.

√ State Aid to Public Libraries

Background: State aid to public libraries augments local support for library services and has been used by local public libraries to boost their print and non-print materials, increase access to electronic information resources, and develop programming for young people, among other things. These programs are extremely important to public libraries located in small and rural counties. Legislative funding makes it possible to maintain current services and increase programs which would not otherwise be possible.

Requested Action: Request funding of each of these programs.

Effect: This will ensure that the citizens of Florida have access to public libraries which meet per capita federal square footage standards and provide quality services and programs.



Development of the Initiatives for the NEFRC Legislative Committee



The Legislative Committee of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) was created to address critical concerns within the member counties which comprise the region. It is composed of one delegate from each county (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns) as well as the President of the NEFRC Board of Directors who serves as an Ex-Officio member.

This Committee is guided by the Home Rule Philosophy to develop and implement community-based solutions.

The legislative priorities of each county within the Northeast Florida Regional Council's membership were collected. From a cumulative list of 69 priorities submitted by the counties involved, each stakeholder was required to determine the top three priorities which most significantly represented the critical needs and concerns of their communities and constituents. Through the gathering and analysis of all priorities submitted by each county individually, the Legislative Committee collectively determined the top five "regional priorities" which represented the most critical concerns of the Northeast Florida region.

All priorities were reviewed to include background, requested action and effect.

Additional information regarding all legislative priorities for the counties is available upon request.



"Serving as Chair for this committee has provided an outstanding opportunity to see that even though we come from different counties with different needs, that there are underlying causes that effect us all. We embrace the concept of "E Pluribus Unum" - From many, comes one. And are fortunate to leverage the resources of the Northeast Florida Regional Council in our efforts to work collectively and promote regionally."

Putnam County Commissioner, Legislative Committee Chair



"The issues we are addressing affect us all. And we must leverage the power of the region to meet the problems head on and affect change. As president of the Northeast Florida Regional Council I consider it a privilege to be part of the vision for the future and a part of this important Committee. Many of the issues which affect our region, such as affordable housing, began as mere inconveniences but have now escalated to crises. We are able to work much more affectively by joining our efforts within the region. I look forward to the continuation of the meaningful work done by each of our counties under the auspices of the Regional Council."

St. Johns County Commissioner, NEFRC Board President
Ex-Officio Member of the Legislative Committee

2006 Legislative Priorities of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

About the Northeast Florida Regional Council

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is a regional government agency serving seven counties—Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns—and their 27 municipalities. Formed in 1977 by an interlocal agreement pursuant to Florida Statutes, Chapter 186, it is one of 11 regional planning councils statewide.

The NEFRC is governed by a 35-member Board, two-thirds elected officials and one-third gubernatorial appointees.

It provides a wide scope of services and programs including strategic planning, Development of Regional Impact reviews, economic development, human services, regional transportation, natural resources, affordable housing, emergency preparedness, and technical assistance.

The Northeast Florida Regional Council is committed to continuing its regional initiatives in support of shared visions, values and goals.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to provide visionary leadership and coordination between counties and governmental agencies to preserve and enhance the quality of Northeast Florida's natural, man-made, economic and social environment.

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