

2008

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

BAKER ★ CLAY ★ DUVAL ★ FLAGLER ★ NASSAU ★ PUTNAM ★ ST. JOHNS

NORTHEAST FLORIDA  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

NEFRC  
6850



*“Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda.”*

# 2008 Northeast Florida Regional Council Legislative Priorities

## Governance / Membership:



### **Commissioner Harold Rutledge**

Northeast Florida Regional Council President  
Chairman - NEFRC Legislative Priorities Committee  
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### **Commissioner Michael Boyle**

First Vice President - Northeast Florida Regional Council  
Vice Chair - NEFRC Legislative Priorities Committee  
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### **Commissioner Jim O'Connell**

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### **Commissioner Chip Laibl**

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### **Commissioner Mike Griffis**

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### **Commissioner Cyndi Stevenson**

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### **Mrs. Karen Stern**

President - Florida Regional Councils Association  
St. Johns County Gubernatorial Representative  
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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"*

# 2008 Legislative Priorities of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

*The following priorities were determined by consensus of the Legislative Priorities Committee and are listed below in alphabetical order:*

## **Protect Local Revenue**

✓ Oppose property tax legislation and initiatives that restricts local government's ability to collect sufficient revenue to provide needed facilities and services.

## **Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Coordinated System**

✓ Amend Chapter 427, F.S. to ensure that all agencies must contact the CTD for services and comply with established guidelines when pursuing transportation outside the coordinated transportation system.

## **Transportation Funding**

✓ Support transportation funding legislation that provides a dedicated and recurring source of revenue, including local option fuel taxes, rental car surcharges, or other taxes or fees, to fund local government essential transportation projects and programs and the transportation regional incentive program.

✓ Support transportation funding legislation that ensures evacuation routes are funded.

✓ Support transportation funding legislation that improves economic development, quality of life and the Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP).

## **Water Supply**

✓ Address the need for water supply conservation and re-use and the water supply needs for Florida and the Northeast Florida region to meet the future needs of the state's growing population and the needs of the environment, agriculture, industry and mining.



# BAKER COUNTY

## Legislative Priorities



### Small County Road Programs

**Background:** The Small County Road Program is critical to meeting Baker County's transportation needs. The Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) provide necessary transportation funding for road improvements that would not otherwise be done.

**Requested Action:** Support continuation and increase funding (generated by statewide gas tax collections) to the State Transportation Trust Fund to provide these essential transportation programs such as SCRAP and SCOP.

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

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

**Background:** County SHIP funds were reduced in 2004 and revenues were redirected. Waiting lists have grown and there is insufficient funding to meet the need.

**Requested Action:** Restore full funding of each County's SHIP allowance to meet the demand and the intent of the act.

**Effect:** Restoration of SHIP funding will immediately increase the number of individuals receiving assistance. Full funding will also reduce the current waiting list of approximately 100 requesting home repair and 75 requesting home purchase.

### Hurricane Preparedness and Response Funds

**Background:** Baker County has only two disaster shelters. We would ask for assistance from the State to build a new Council on Aging facility that would not only help our Senior Citizens but also provide adequate shelter for the community. This facility will also provide shelter to other surrounding counties in the area in case of a major hurricane, as Baker County is a recipient County for the adjacent more urban exposed areas.

**Requested Action:** Support the funding for Hurricane relief and Preparedness and help the small recipient counties to construct major hurricane or other disaster facilities in Northeast Florida.

**Effect:** Will provide a multi-purpose building for our senior citizens and also provide a shelter for evacuees and their pets in the event of a disaster.

### County Medicaid Responsibilities

**Background:** Medicaid costs continue to increase for counties. Small counties are hit particularly hard due to low countywide taxable value and the high rate of Medicaid eligibility. This ever-increasing percentage of the County's Medicaid eligible population in Baker County is due to influx from neighboring counties where residents are escaping high cost of living and aging population.

**Requested Action:** Oppose legislation that would increase the county share of nursing home and inpatient hospital costs.

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

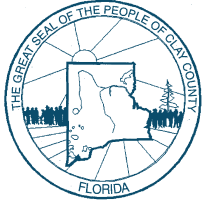
*Require* the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to reimburse counties when AHCA recovers Medicaid costs from liable third parties.

### Ad Valorem Property Taxes

**Background:** Tallahassee passes laws that require local governments to roll back millage rates regardless of local needs and priorities. At the same time local governments are compelled to assume a greater share of State fiscal responsibilities.

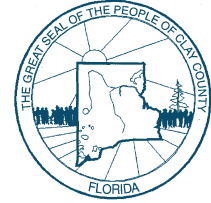
**Requested Action:** Direct the Constitution Revision Committee to focus on Ad Valorem tax issues in the State from a comprehensive standpoint and formulate proposals for the November 2008 election period.

**Effect:** All local governments will be in a position to respond responsibly and control locally relevant issues without interference from Tallahassee.



# CLAY COUNTY

## Legislative Priorities



### County Medicaid Responsibilities

**Background:** The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) is proposing a number of changes that would shift additional costs to county government in the delivery of health and human services to a county's population. These potential policy changes leave counties vulnerable annually to potential cost shifts when there is a state budget deficit or shortfall.

**Requested Action:** Oppose legislation increasing a county's share of Medicaid nursing home billing.

Oppose legislation affecting the Coordinated Transportation System. AHCA has proposed cuts in Medicaid funding which will have a direct impact on the county's ability to provide non-emergency transportation services to the elderly and disabled.

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.

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

### Transportation – Proposed Outer Beltway

**Background:** The Outer Beltway is a proposed four-lane limited access toll facility comprised of the Branan Field-Chaffee Road (SR 23) project in Duval and Clay Counties and the St. Johns River Crossing Corridor in Clay and St. Johns Counties. The Proposed Outer Beltway would provide a system-to-system connection between I-10 in Duval County and I-95 in St. Johns County. The 46.5 mile proposed beltway will provide relief from increasing traffic congestion, promote community connectivity and would be an important asset in propelling Clay County's economic development growth.

**Requested Action:** Support the Proposed Outer Beltway as a statewide priority.

**Effect:** The construction and funding of this proposed roadway and connector roads will be a major factor in Clay County's future economic environment.

### 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 is projected to be the third most populous state by 2010, behind California and Texas. Approximately 1,000 new residents move to the state every day and by 2025 it is forecast that the state will have a population of 25.5 million.

**Requested Action:** Support replenishment of the Transportation Trust Fund from state revenues for transportation projects only.

Enhance financial resources for local transportation improvements including public transit initiatives.

**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.

### State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program Funding

**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 state level reductions.

Support legislation to improve affordable housing initiatives.

**Effect:** Restoration of maximum SHIP fund amounts will immediately increase the number of individuals receiving housing assistance and reduce the current waiting list.



# DUVAL COUNTY

## Legislative Priorities



### Protect Local Revenue

**Background:** Duval County has responsibly managed its property taxes and other revenue over the years, providing city services at a low cost to residents.

**Requested Action:** Duval County opposes any restrictions imposed on home rule and local government’s ability to collect adequate revenue for city services.

**Effect:** Preserve local government’s home rule.

### Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

**Background:** Florida continues to see a high growth rate throughout the state, including Northeast Florida. As a result, there is increased traffic congestion and increased travel time for commuters. Additionally, construction costs are rapidly increasing, making it more difficult and expensive to improve infrastructure to accommodate the population growth in our metropolitan areas. The need for public transportation is approaching and with it, development that is oriented around transportation hubs to help encourage use of the transportation system.

**Requested Action:** Duval County requests support efforts from the State to assist local government in encouraging and creating Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Support efforts and funding are also needed for a major transportation system in Duval County, such as a light rail, that will connect residential centers, business centers and the airport.

**Effect:** A major public transportation system and transit oriented development will help relieve traffic

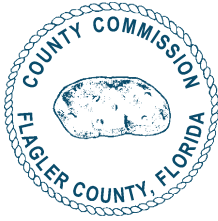
congestion as well as cut commuting time and pollution as a result from less cars on the roadways. A transportation system and TOD will help accommodate for future growth.

### River Restoration and Water Access

**Background:** While efforts in recent years to clean up our waterways, specifically the St. Johns River, have produced improvements, much is still needed to be done. The St. Johns River and its tributaries at times have high bacteria levels as a result of failing sewer lines and septic tanks as well as other pollutants. Additionally, increased desire for waterfront property and development has limited public access to the water.

**Requested Action:** Duval County requests State funding to help continue to clean the St. Johns River and restore its health. Additionally, assistance is requested to help local government preserve waterfront land for public access.

**Effect:** Assistance with this request will result in improved water quality as well as increased waterfront accessibility for the public.



# 2008

## FLAGLER COUNTY

### Legislative Priorities



#### **PRIORITY 1: Replace Bridges and Widen County Road 305**

Aging infrastructure is a problem faced by all the counties in the Regional Council. A tightened state budget has cut funds from the main state sources for repairs and replacements for bridges and highways. In light of recent events with the bridge collapse in Minnesota, it is imperative that Florida counties get the funds needed to make essential repairs to secondary roads.

#### **PRIORITY 2: Construct an Interstate Interchange at Matanzas Woods Overpass**

Counties experiencing rapid growth, such as Flagler County in Northeast Florida, need a process to expedite interstate connections. This necessitates federal and state funding to make the connections, particularly when evacuation and safety issues are involved.

#### **PRIORITY 3: Beverly Beach Water/Wastewater Utility Plant**

Secondary effluent from the plant is currently dumped into the Intracoastal Waterway a Class III water. A grant is needed to rebuild the Wasterwater Treatment Plant in the Town of Beverly Beach or a wasterwater treatment interconnect with the City of Flagler Beach. Effective treatment of wastewater in the small coastal Town of Beverly Beach would prevent further degradation of the Intercoastal Waterway.

#### **PRIORITY 4: Manatee Protection Plan**

Small counties face financial difficulties in providing environmental studies and ongoing enforcement of boating laws to protect the manatee.

#### **PRIORITY 5: County Seeks Water District funding for Marineland Acres**

#### **PRIORITY 6: Feasibility Study For Shoreline Protection**

Beach erosion is a statewide issue affecting a number of the counties in the Regional Council. The problem should be looked at from a statewide perspective.

#### **PRIORITY 7: Funding for Construction of a New Inmate Facility**

Many counties in Florida are dealing with problems stemming from a rapid growth in population that particularly affects the legal system and jail facilities. For more than two years, Flagler County had the dubious distinction of being the fastest growing county in the United States. It is currently the fifth fastest growing county in the United States. Nowhere is that more evident than in the population in the county jail. Like roads and other infrastructure impacted by growth, state assistance is needed to keep county jails from becoming overcrowded and therefore dangerous for staff and inmates alike.

#### **PRIORITY 8: County Seeks Funds for Civic Arena**

#### **PRIORITY 9: Support for Protection of Medicaid Benefits for Citizens**

Rising Medicaid costs are a concern at the county level particularly in small counties.

#### **PRIORITY 10: Support Needed for Tri-County Agricultural Research Center**

Centers like the Tri-County Agricultural Research Center at Hastings conduct the research needed to keep the agricultural industry in Northeast Florida alive and well and adapting to the changes needed to keep the industry vibrant.



# NASSAU COUNTY

## Legislative Priorities



### Transportation Funding

**Background:** Transportation Funding - Local governments have been tasked with enforcing concurrency and when required entering into proportional fair share agreements. Funds from the proportional fair share agreements are only a small portion of the costs for transportation improvements. Nassau County continues to struggle to address infrastructure backlog created by rapid growth, legislative mandates, and tax cuts. The Small County Road Programs (SCOP), Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) are critical to Nassau County future growth. Nassau County is dependent on State Highway System (SHS) and Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) as the primary corridors for commercial, commuter, and recreation vehicular traffic. The primary corridors are AIA / SR 200, US 17, and Interstate 95. In addition, AIA/SR 200 is a hurricane evacuation route and is critical for the safety of the residents of Amelia Island. Based on existing and proposed developments, all of these corridors are operating below the accepted Level of Service (LOS).

#### **Requested Action:**

- Support increased funding for transportation through programs like the SCOP and SCRAP.
- 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).
- Institute new programs for funding local transportation improvements.
- Support FDOT to pursue major projects on the SIS in Nassau County especially A1A/SR 200 from I-95 to Amelia Island for use as a hurricane evacuation route.

**Effect:** Improve the level of service in all county roads, ensure adequate evacuation roads and promote emergency preparedness.

### Continue support of the State Aid Program for Library Services

**Background:** 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 be possible.

**Requested Action:** Request support for 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.





# PUTNAM COUNTY

## Legislative Priorities



### Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation

**Background:** Many residents of Putnam County depend on Medicaid-funded non-emergency transportation to reach medical appointments. This service—of particular importance to clients needing critical services such as dialysis, rehabilitation, or chemotherapy—allows them to reach doctors and hospitals and receive care. In rural areas where medical providers are often in short supply, communities are far from primary care physicians or specialists, and public transportation systems are usually nonexistent, Medicaid transportation fulfills a critical need. These and other appointments are necessary although not considered “emergency transportation” and for some acquiring this type of transportation can be a daily struggle.

**Requested Action:** Support legislation to restore budget cuts in Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation funding. Provide transportation for life sustaining medical appointments of Medicaid clients in Putnam County.

**Effect:** Funding for Medicaid-funded non-emergency transportation will ensure a better quality of life for residents of the county.

### Small County Road Programs

**Background:** The Small County Road Programs are critical to Putnam County’s transportation issues. The Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and the Small County Outreach Program (SCOP) have provided 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 that 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.

### East Putnam County Regional Water & Wastewater System

**Background:** Putnam County is in the process of designing a Regional Water System in the East Palatka area of the County. The need for these facilities is growing rapidly due to septic tanks and package treatment plants serving as the principal means used for wastewater treatment in the County. The only major areas being served by centralized community wastewater treatment systems located within the cities of Palatka, Crescent City, and Welaka, though there are 26 domestic wastewater package plants in the county.

The City of Palatka municipal wastewater treatment facility is currently operating at 90% capacity.

**Requested Action:** Support funding to accomplish the public facility needs to better serve the County and remedy the excessive overuse of the current municipal wastewater treatment facility.

**Effect:** Improvement of the critical state of wastewater facilities within the County.



# 2008

## ST. JOHNS COUNTY

### Legislative Priorities



#### Transportation

**Background:** Designation of SR 9B as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Facility will make this critical roadway eligible for the greatest possible range of State, Federal and regional funding resources.

CR 210 and I-95 are the only interstate connections between Northern St. Johns County and the greater Jacksonville urban area. This interchange experiences severe congestion and significant safety concerns during every am and pm peak traffic period. Safety and capacity improvements are urgently needed.

The St. Johns County Commission has included this project among their top three priorities for several years. The SR 313 Bypass will create a half-loop around St. Augustine to relieve excessive stagnation along U.S. 1 and provide a preferred travel route for our fastest-growing county. The secondary effect is the improvement of local traffic flow within St. Augustine.

**Requested Action:** Designation of SR 9B as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Facility in order to make this critical roadway eligible for the greatest possible range of funding resources.

St. Johns County requests State funds for long term improvements to the I-95 interchange with CR 210 as specified by the forthcoming Interchange Modification Report.

St. Johns County request State funding for the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the SR 313 Bypass from SR 207 to SR 16.

**Effect:** The construction and funding of these proposed roadway and connector roads will be a major factor in St. Johns County's future economic development.

#### Water Conservation / Quality

**Background:** Ground water in some areas of Florida is not sufficient to meet the future needs of the state's growing population and the needs of the environment, agriculture, industry and mining.

Water management districts have identified areas where existing and planned water supply sources will not be able to meet all future needs without resulting in unacceptable impacts to water resources and related natural systems.

St. Johns County opposes water transfers. Current Florida water policy will allow these transfers after all local options, including re-use, conservation and desalination, are exhausted.

**Requested Action:** Support the St. Johns River Alliance and to oppose water transfers.

**Effect:** St. Johns County believes that the regional approach to water supply regulation is successful.

#### Recreation / Open Space

**Background:** With rising land prices around the State, the Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program has helped local governments purchase land for parks, recreation, open space and conservation.

**Requested Action:** Request continued support for funding the Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program and support a successor program in 2010.

**Effect:** The recent growth rate that both St. Johns County and Northeast Florida have experienced over the last few years, demonstrates the need for continuing to secure lands for parks, recreation, open space, and conservation for our future generations.



# 2008 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); which includes the current President of the NEFRC.

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 and other regional stakeholders were collected. Each entity was requested to determine at least three priorities which most significantly represented the critical needs and concerns of their communities and constituents. The cumulative list totaled **42** priorities.

Through the gathering and analysis of all priorities submitted by each county individually, the Legislative Committee collectively determined the top four "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.*



**HAROLD RUTLEDGE**  
Clay County Commissioner,  
Legislative Committee Chair  
President, Northeast Florida  
Regional Council

*"I believe in the power of cooperation and that we are never stronger than when we pool our resources for the betterment of our regional community.*

*Serving as Chairman for this committee has allowed me to see first hand, that although we come from different counties with unique perspectives, we embrace many of the same critical issues that affect the quality of life in our communities.*

*The resources and expertise of the Northeast Florida Regional Council affords us a greater opportunity to work collectively and promote regionally."*

*"Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda"*



# 2008 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 163, 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, 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.

### For additional information:

**Brian D. Teeple**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

**Mario L. Taylor**  
*Deputy Chief Executive Officer /  
Chief Operations Officer*



*“Celebrating Thirty Years of Regional Excellence.”*

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