



2013 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

*Adopted February 12, 2013
Revised March 8, 2013*

PINELLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS 2013 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

UNFUNDED MANDATES

 Oppose state unfunded mandates that negatively impact local government budgets and control which also compromises Pinellas County's ability to provide other needed services to the community. These mandates are usually imposed without discussion or consensus from the local governments on the impacts that they will have on available resources or methods of implementation.

ITEMS OF GENERAL CONCERN

Beach Nourishment

 Support legislation that maintains a state funding source for beach restoration projects throughout Florida.

Communications Services Tax

 Support legislation that will: amend and/or revise the current law in order to simplify administration and collection of the current tax; provide for a broad and equitable tax base; provide for a system that is reliable, fair and transparent; maintain a system that is revenue neutral for each of the governmental entities and provide for a more reliable and stable revenue stream.

Delinquent Real Property Taxes, Tax Certificates, and Delinquent Tangible Personal Property Taxes

 Support legislation that lowers the interest rate on delinquent real property taxes and certificates, and delinquent tangible personal property taxes.

Background: Rep. Ahern's proposed House Bill 421 has been filed to lower the interest rate on delinquent real property tax certificates from 18% to 12%. The intention of this legislation is to provide relief to Florida families by helping those who are trying to make tax payments. By lowering the interest rate by 6%, this becomes a more affordable possibility for the families who most need the tax break.

If the intent of the Legislators is to provide relief to delinquent taxpayers, the Tax Collector also suggested the following statutes be reviewed and modified accordingly.

- Change the rate to prime + 12% or whatever the Legislature deems appropriate.
- Amend 197.542, F.S., *Sale at Public Auction*
- Amend 197.172(3) F.S., *Interest rate; calculation and minimum*
- Amend 197.402(2) and (3) F.S. accordingly

Department of Health Reorganization

 Support continued funding for the Pinellas County Health Departments, thus maintaining their ability to provide primary care and direct patient care services within our community.

 Oppose any state reductions to the County Health Department Trust Funds and any legislation which proposes to reduce or eliminate the provision of primary health care services by the County Health Departments.

Department of Juvenile Justice Billing

 Support juvenile justice reforms that reduce county financial obligations for detention, revise the current billing structures, and provide for more accountable juvenile justice operations.

 The Board supports the need for greater collaboration and incentives to benefit youth and reduce detention cost waste. The Board opposes new cost obligations to the county.

Designer Drugs/Synthetics

 Support additional legislation and rule making that clearly addresses this evolving problem for effective regulation, consistent enforcement, and proactive, rapid elimination of emerging products.

Background: Rep. Ingram & Sen. Bradley introduced bills (HB 619/SB 294) to expand the controlled substances schedule to include 22 new formulas of synthetic drugs.

 The Board is committed to addressing the ongoing and emerging trends of designer drugs and their impacts within our community.

Fertilizer Ordinance

 Oppose legislation that would pre-empt any local fertilizer ordinances established prior to July 1, 2011.

Florida Association of Counties

 Support the policy statements of the Florida Association of Counties' 2013 Legislative Program which are not contrary to the policies of Pinellas County.

Florida Retirement System (FRS)

 Oppose any benefit change that results in an increase in the county's FRS contribution rate.

Background: On March 6, 2012, a Leon County Circuit Court Judge ruled in favor of a challenge brought forth by a group of state, county and school board employees. The Court found that the FRS reform law violated several constitutional provisions. The state immediately appealed the ruling. On January 17, 2013, the Florida Supreme Court upheld the law requiring public employees to contribute 3 percent of their pay to the state's pension plan.

Gas Tax Indexing

 Support legislation authorizing counties to index the local option gas taxes to annual changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Infrastructure Sales Tax (Penny for Pinellas)

 Support a general statute amendment allowing the county to have more discretion for utilizing Penny funds for operations or maintenance expenditures.

Inmate Medical Expenses

 Support legislation that reduces expenses to the county or that limits county or municipal medical costs of an in-custody pretrial detainee or sentenced inmate to 110 percent of the Medicare allowable rate.

 In addition, the Board supports any administrative rule changes that would allow for inpatient medical services provided to Medicaid eligible inmates to be billed to Medicaid.

Internet Cafes

 Support legislation that provides for statewide oversight and regulation of so-called Sweepstakes Gaming facilities and Internet Cafes, including action banning sweepstakes locations that are currently leveraging loopholes for conduct of gaming, actions to ban unregulated gaming machines leveraging sweepstakes law to operate in convenience stores, while allowing counties to allow or deny the operation of such businesses within their jurisdiction.

Jail Impacts

 Oppose actions by the state to adjust detention responsibilities and maintain greater numbers of sentenced inmates in local jails.

Background: The Department of Corrections has proposed an amendment to F. S. 944.17(3)(a) that would require only persons with one year or more left on their sentences (at time of sentencing) are to be sent to prison. Such a change would increase jail populations and shift financial responsibility for these inmates from the state to the counties.

Local Business Tax

 Oppose legislation seeking to repeal Chapter 205, F.S., which would prevent local governments from collecting a local business tax. The county does not currently collect the tax; however, a repeal of Chapter 205, F.S., would impact our ability to take advantage of this alternative revenue source in the future.

Medicaid Billing

 Support the revision of the current county-state Medicaid billing system in exchange for requiring the state to develop a new equitable billing process in consultation with the counties.

 Support the continuation of the advance refund request process which is scheduled to expire in April 2013. This would affect the county's ability to review their bills prior to submitting payment.

Prescription Drugs

 Support additional legislation and rule making that provides for the appropriate prescribing practices, prescription use, and proper accountability in prescribing drugs.

 The Board opposes any state action that seeks to preempt local regulatory options to curb the ongoing prescription problem and to protect our community. The Board is committed to addressing the continuing social and medical problems of prescription abuse and treatment within our community.

Pretrial Release

 Oppose legislation that would restrict or eliminate local control over coordinated, highly effective local pretrial services that might increase the local jail population and therefore increase the County's expenses.

 Specifically, the Board opposes legislation that restricts pretrial services to only indigent clients.

Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Representation

 Oppose any legislation that reduces Pinellas County representation on the SWFWMD Governing Board.

Background: Currently, Pinellas County has two representatives plus one representative that is shared by Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. Proposed House Bill 147 and Senate Bill 412 would reduce the number of representatives on the District's Governing Board from 13 to 9, including reducing Pinellas County representatives from 2.5 (two full-time and one shared) to 1 representative.

Title V Funding for Local Air Quality Program



Oppose any legislation that would drastically reduce or eliminate the local air quality control contract.

Water Quality / Numeric Nutrient Criteria



Support science-based numeric nutrient criteria for Florida's waters.



Oppose any new rule promulgated by the EPA or DEP that imposes unnecessary costs to county governments.

Workers Compensation Claim Medication



Oppose legislation that allows an authorized physician to dispense and fill prescriptions for workers compensation claims.

Background: House Bill 483 has been filed which would allow physicians to dispense and fill prescriptions. The issue is that physicians are subject to less regulation than pharmacies and can charge higher rates for medications, such as by creating a new National Drug Code or using an inflated average wholesale price. In addition, by not having an injured worker fill their prescriptions at one pharmacy the potential for misuse exists.