

## McKinlay Memo - District 6 Update

Commissioner Melissa McKinlay <district6+pbcgov.org@ccsend.com>

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To: Updates <updates@gladesinitiative.org>



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### Accomplishments As County Commissioner

This week, I'm continuing to share highlights of accomplishments during my time as the District 6 Commissioner:

**Pushing Back Against Acreage Development:** I pushed back against a development proposal in The Acreage called Delray Linton Groves a few years ago which was seeking a few thousand new homes plus commercial space. I successfully defended my opposition, which led to a vote of denial from the Board. The developers went back to the drawing board and sold the land to FPL. It's now a solar field. This was a win-win moment that makes me proud.

**Syringe Exchange Program:** Florida reluctantly passed a pilot project for this program in Miami in partnership with a private university, the University of Miami. It has been tremendously successful at reducing HIV and Hepatitis rates in Miami Dade County, protecting first responders from accidental "sticks" (needles are required to be carried in hard plastic cases), reducing the improper disposal

of used needles, and Miami actually collected more needles than they distributed.

It's called harm reduction and it leads to providing options for treatment and other services to reduce addiction and infectious diseases in our community. The Legislature did a 180 on this issue and overwhelmingly passed the legislation that gave interested counties the option to create this program.

I led the effort to be the 2nd county in Florida to have this program and the 1st to take the local option. Once the bill was signed into law, we immediately passed an ordinance authorizing one in our county.

The caveat? NO public funding can be used for the syringe exchange portion of these harm reduction services. So, through a partnership with Rebel Recovery, Palm Beach County opened the door to this program in 2021. To date, we've taken in more syringes than we've given out. Sometimes you have to meet a person where they're at for them to seek help.

Thank you Dr. Tookes for your leadership, Senator Oscar Braynon for sponsoring the bill and Senator Rob Bradley for having the courage to change your mind.

**Supporting Firefighters:** During the Great Recession, budget cuts forced a policy change that led to a reduction in the number of personnel on ambulances from 3 to 2 firefighter/paramedics. So that meant one drove while the other was in the back with a patient. In this day and age, medical technology provides advanced care but also increased amounts of information to monitor on a patient. The better protocol is 3.

This was in effect until the last contract negotiations about three years ago. One of the changes we made was to increase the number of personnel on a rescue truck from 2 back to 3.

And I pushed to take that one step further. It's one thing to have it in an updated union contract, which get updated every 5yrs. It's another thing to make it a little bit harder to change, especially as Commissions and Administration change.

So I had this rule put in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Any changes to the "Comp Plan" require an advisory board hearing, two commission public hearings and a review by the state. It is an added layer of protection for our first responders, but, more importantly, our patients.

And then I made sure this new rule had a name in our Comp Plan. We named it the Ron Jarriel Rule, the only such piece in our comp plan named in memorium. Ron was my friend and colleague, an elected Councilman for the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. But he was also a retired firefighter who advocated strongly on behalf of this change. He credited his brother's life being saved because the ambulance he was riding in had an extra set of hands. Miss my

friend. Proud we honored him. Even prouder we improved the quality of care for those in our county.

**Protecting Lake Okeechobee:** For 8 years, I have supported efforts to maintain our county's backup water supply from Lake Okeechobee, to protect the ecology of our Lake that supports ecotourism and the Glades community, provide the water needed to grow our food and, most importantly, protect my constituents that live on the shores of Lake O from the effects of Mother Nature.

We listened to science. We worked with our surrounding counties. We always had all the stakeholders around our table. This conversation will continue long after I am gone but I'm proud of the way we participated these last 8 years.

**Mayor's Ball:** I leave office as the Mayor who had the highest attendance and highest amount raised for homelessness prevention at a Mayors' Ball! And it was ALL because the Glades showed up!

This humble community always showed up when you asked for help. I am SO proud to have had the opportunity to represent this part of my district!

**National Association of Counties:** I am a firm believer in the concept of together we're better. Immediately upon election, I became involved with the National Association of Counties. During my time with NACo, I served....

\*On the Board of Directors as a Florida Rep

\*As the 1st woman & Floridian to Chair the prestigious Agriculture & Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee during the last reauthorization of the Farm Bill

\*Hosted a national Farm Bill Summit in Palm Beach County, which was attended by more than 100 commissioners from across the country

\*Testified before the International Trade Commission regarding the impacts of federal trade agreements on Florida agriculture

\*As President of the NACo Women's Caucus and held the first ever Joint Meeting of the Congressional Women's Caucus and NACo Women's Caucus

\*As a panelist on a National Human Trafficking Awareness Conference with US Senator Amy Klobuchar and Congresswoman Ann Wagner

\*Served on numerous panels at NACo Conferences across the country speaking on the Opioid Crisis, County Opioid Litigation Cases and Human Trafficking

\*Served on the Board of NACo's young professionals group, NextGen, and helped coordinate annual service projects for human trafficking, children's hospital patients, domestic violence, school supply drives, foster care, etc...

\*As an appointee to the International Economic Development Task Force

\*As an appointee to the Rural Caucus

\*As an appointee to the National Immigration Reform Task Force, where we spent three days touring the Paso del Norte and Juarez, Mexico border patrol stations with Homeland Security and the Mexican Government

\*As an invitee to the Rural Housing Cohort Program

\*As a Board member, toured oil & gas industry sites in rural Utah and learned how important these industries are to these rural communities

\*Successfully placed into NACo's permanent legislative platform policy positions on human trafficking, sober homes, farmer suicide prevention, and farm to market road needs

\*Had the honor of giving the successful nominating speech for the 2024 President of NACo, Sonoma County Supervisor James Gore

\*Asked so many questions, provided input, did interviews, and made some of the best lifelong friends serving in leadership roles across our country.

I am blessed to have had these opportunities and to help put Palm Beach County - and especially our agricultural community - on the national map. It was a major balancing act keeping up with everything, but I managed.







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### **Election Congratulations**

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to all of the winners from election day last week. It's not easy running for office. It takes an immense commitment from yourself and your family, and a sincere belief that you can make a difference.

The next District 6 Commissioner will be Sara Baxter. I am working with her to ensure a smooth transition. One of the most important lessons I learned from working with Senator Bill Nelson is the importance of putting differences aside, reaching across the aisle, and putting constituents first. That's a rule I hold dear, and I am happy to offer whatever assistance I can as Commissioner-elect Baxter takes office to serve the residents of District 6.

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### **Appreciating PBC's Emergency Response Team**

Hurricane Nicole made landfall as a category 1 hurricane just south of Vero Beach last week. I'm grateful that the storm wasn't stronger and Palm Beach County fared well. This is another important reminder that hurricane season doesn't end until November 30th and storms can pop up very quickly, so we cannot let our guard down. Thankfully, our County's Emergency Response Team is always prepared.

Over the years, I've proudly worked alongside the best emergency response team in the nation. All the times Governors, Senators, members of Congress and the Legislature have been through our Emergency Operations Center to participate in our briefings has been a learning lesson in leadership style.

Some observations:

US Senator Bill Nelson was always a steady hand. Calm. Deliberate. And asked very technical questions.

Former Governor & now US Senator Rick Scott showed up at our EOC every time a storm threatened our area. He received his briefings alongside all of us and did his best to be a part of the team.

US Senator Marco Rubio was quick to learn the details, spoke concisely, and had a firm understanding of emergency response.

Our members of Congress always responded quickly and did everything they could to get us FEMA assistance, especially Congresswoman Lois Frankel.

But one experience stands out to me. When Irma hit, I had the opportunity to travel through the Glades over to Immokalee with Senators Nelson and Rubio. They stood alongside me as we fed families in the Glades and I with them as they met with students in Immokalee. Watching those two put Florida first was a valuable lesson in statesmanship.

We sometimes learn by example. I am proud of the fellow leaders I've had in my circle that have allowed me a seat at their table. Together we really are better and Florida First is a much better way to lead than partisan politics.

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Commissioner Melissa McKinlay  
(561) 355-2206  
[mmckinlay@pbcgov.org](mailto:mmckinlay@pbcgov.org)

Kelley Burke  
Chief of Staff  
(561) 355-2206  
[kburke@pbcgov.org](mailto:kburke@pbcgov.org)

Joseph Sophie  
Senior Legislative Aide  
(561) 355-2206  
[jsophie@pbcgov.org](mailto:jsophie@pbcgov.org)

Lisa Wilson  
Legislative Aide  
(561) 996-4814  
[awilson1@pbcgov.org](mailto:awilson1@pbcgov.org)



PBC Commission District 6 | 301 N. Olive Ave, WPB, FL 33401

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