

Tri-County Legislative Program

Guiding Principles

In an effort to streamline and optimize the annual Legislative Program, the partnership of St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River Counties, submit the following Guiding Principles that will overlay our collective approach to the development and approval of legislative priorities both now and in the months and years ahead. These principles are designed to reflect an approach to legislative advocacy and engagement deeply rooted in the importance and autonomy of home rule governance, in addition to an appreciation for the vital role played by our state partners, and a desire to contribute to the public policy dialogue on behalf of our shared constituents in a meaningful and consistent way.

The Three Counties support *Home Rule*, oppose *Unfunded Mandates*, and oppose efforts to reduce local government revenue sources or limit flexibility in how they are spent.

This guiding principle includes the Counties' opposition to legislation that would create cost shifts from traditionally state responsibilities, circumvent local oversight of development or tax issues, limit local control of critical services, or impact our ability to provide a responsive and reflective local government to our constituents. We also support legislation that creates additional financial flexibility for local budgets, enhances local control of policies and procedures impacting our residents and allows our Counties to – with the utmost responsiveness – meet the needs of the community.

The Three Counties support efforts and investment in *Economic Development* initiatives that both contribute to the further diversification of our state and local economies, and support tourism and cultural foundations upon which so much of our regional impact depends on.

This guiding principle includes the Counties' support for things such as full funding for Visit Florida, Enterprise Florida, the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, the Department of State's Arts and Cultural Grants, and reinstatement of the Qualified Targeted Industries Tax Refund program.

The Three Counties support key investments into *Environmental and Natural Resources* that protect Florida's fragile environment, strengthen our resilience against the impacts of climate change, address the stresses and impacts of continued growth on our Lagoon, lakes, rivers, streams, beaches, and ocean.

This guiding principle includes stand-alone legislative appropriation requests for water and environmental projects critical to the counties and region, comprehensive Everglades restoration, beach and inlet management and restoration, and investments into the health and sustainability of the Indian River Lagoon.

The Three Counties support robust investment in public infrastructure that supports both planned and potential growth, strengthens transportation and communication networks, and provides greater mobility and accessibility for our residents.

This guiding principle includes full funding of Florida's Transportation Five-Year Work Plan through the State Transportation Trust Fund including appropriate funding for road construction, public transit, deep water seaports such as the Port of Fort Pierce, and the Strategic Intermodal

System. It also includes expansion of state-supported expansion of broadband internet services to rural and underserved areas, public access trail networks and other investments that enhance the quality of life for *all* Treasure Coast residents.

The Three Counties support better partnership and cost share of critical public health and human services.

This guiding principle includes advocating for a cap on county Medicaid cost growth, more robust funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment, and opposing efforts to modify or underfund the public health system and the role of county health departments. It also includes appropriate statewide funding for homelessness, county-specific appropriations projects, full funding of the state's affordable housing trust fund, and funding for Healthy Families and Community Healthcare Clinics.

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