

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0907

April 25, 2007

Dear Friends,

As we near the midpoint of the First Session of the 110th Congress, I wanted to provide you with an update of some of my activities, projects and legislative priorities as your Representative.

As you may know, the 7th Congressional District in which you live extends over six counties and includes 32 cities and an estimated population of 850,000 people. Many challenges face our region including growth management, transportation congestion and unfortunately most recently natural disasters. While our area has been recovering from Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne, we were struck by tornadoes in Volusia County last Christmas Day and again with even greater damage on February 2nd. Securing federal aid for the most recent catastrophic twister was almost immediate. However, dealing with the smaller Christmas Day storm proved more challenging.

Working with State and local officials and with wonderful support from private volunteers and organizations, many of our citizens received assistance to help put their homes and businesses back together. While some of the federal disaster support from FEMA was prompt, it is my intention to have Congress review the entire declaration and appeals process. Currently idle federal assets like mobile homes for temporary housing also need to be better utilized to grant greater flexibility to State and federal officials. There is nothing like several natural disasters to find out how government programs really do or do not work, for that matter.

My efforts to improve veterans services also continue. Unfortunately a recent survey indicated more than 25% of our region's homeless are veterans. Many of these vets suffer from substance abuse and mental health problems. Others lack job skills or have debilitating health conditions. After conducting several forums with Veterans Administration (VA) officials, experts, professionals and leaders of community service organizations, programs are being reviewed and plans are underway to expand and improve services.

It was my honor to participate in the January opening of a new 16-unit facility in Daytona Beach which will provide housing for chronically homeless individuals, including veterans from Flagler County. The project, called "My Apartment", is operated by Serenity House and will also include a fairly large substance abuse and mental care wing. Many of our homeless veterans need more extensive treatment than can be provided by clinics or current VA care facilities.

During January and February visits to counties in our district, I had the opportunity to hear from government officials and citizens. Increased insurance rates, property taxes and transportation needs continue to be top priorities. While the Florida State Legislature has provided some relief on insurance costs, Congressional action has been restricted by states that have limited numbers of natural disasters. Continuing tax relief for federal taxpayers will be quite a challenge given the makeup of the new Congress. Estate tax relief may be dead and other tax relief measures may not be extended.

Another district challenge during the first months of 2007 is the continued increase in serious crime. Last year I brought together federal, State and local officials to evaluate the effectiveness of our joint efforts to address the matter. With continued problems, we have renewed our commitment to examine every option to make resources available and to take corrective steps to deal with the situation. This has been a very difficult challenge but our law enforcement personnel, schools and public service organizations unfortunately have inherited some of our family and social failures.

However in the area of transportation, your Representative in Congress was fortunate to win a new role. I was pleased to be selected by my GOP colleagues in a highly contested race to become the House Transportation Committee Republican Leader. After six years of chairing the House Aviation Subcommittee, I now serve on and am helping to direct six Transportation Subcommittees including Highways, Rail, Aviation, Coast Guard, Water Resources, and Economic Development and Public Buildings. Between Committee business and responsibilities in our Congressional District, every day has been heavily scheduled in the new Congress.

With the summer storm season just around the corner, it is important that all levels of government work to protect our coastline, particularly at Flagler Beach and Beverly Beach where erosion has damaged our beaches and A1A. As you may know, over the past several years I have brought together government leaders from the Cities of Flagler Beach and Beverly Beach along with representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Transportation and Flagler County to identify and expedite a cost-effective solution.

As a result of these efforts, we have developed a consensus on completing a federal feasibility study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a beach renourishment plan, as well as on pursuing a State and local demonstration project to test new beach stabilization technology. In Congress, I am working to secure additional federal support to match existing State and local

funding. I have also authored language in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act, legislation which authorizes federal beach renourishment and water infrastructure projects, to require the Army Corps to expedite and complete repairs to Flagler's shoreline as a national priority. This legislation will soon be considered in the House of Representatives and must also clear the U.S. Senate.

As you may know, improving our area's transportation has been one of my top objectives in Congress. As the fastest growing county in the United States, it can be a challenge to keep up with highway needs and congestion in Flagler County. Six-laning the 18.6 miles of I-95 in Flagler County began in March, 2005 and will come to an end this Summer at a cost of \$73.7 million. I-95 widening has been completed to the north in St. Johns County and to the south in Volusia County down to the I-4 junction in Daytona Beach.

Construction of a new overpass at the junction of I-95 and the Matanzas Woods Parkway has been completed. Flagler County committed funds to advance construction by four years and will be reimbursed \$6.7 million for right-of-way acquisition and construction through 2008/09. The new overpass has improved traffic circulation, and potential expansion of this junction to an I-95 interchange is now under consideration.

We are also coordinating federal and State assistance to expedite widening of the I-95/Palm Coast Parkway. Funds are in place to begin design and right-of-way acquisition for adding lanes to the Parkway from Boulder Rock Drive to the west of I-95 to Florida Park Drive to the east. Also being studied is a future interchange with I-95.

With federal and State assistance, State Road 100 is being four-laned from U.S. 1 through Bunnell to Belle Terre Parkway. Work on the \$10.8 million project began in June, 2005 and may be completed this summer. Improvements to this intersection will help alleviate traffic and also will serve as the keystone for the development of a regional industrial center.

Improving public transit and seniors transportation services is another priority, particularly since it can be difficult to get around Flagler County without an automobile. We have been successful in obtaining federal resources to replace and modernize Flagler's fleet of buses, and are working to provide connecting service with the Volusia VOTRAN, Putnam Ride Solutions and St. Johns County Council on Aging transit systems.

In addition, Flagler County has received State assistance to design and construct the Lehigh Trail, a 2.7 mile trail/bike path that extends from Colbert Lane to U.S. 1 in Bunnell and will include the construction of a trailhead at the Colbert Lane end of the trail. Federal support is anticipated.

Last year we helped secure a \$5 million grant and loan to Beverly Beach to upgrade its wastewater treatment facilities. While that work is underway, we are also assisting the City of

Bunnell and Flagler County with additional projects to rehabilitate water treatment systems and to plan related infrastructure for the future. As our communities continue to grow, ensuring safe, clean water and adequate wastewater treatment becomes increasingly important.

Finally, progress is being made with construction of a new residential substance abuse treatment center for Flagler County in Bunnell. Working with County and City officials, land has been acquired and initial federal support is being matched by State, local and private contributions. The Stewart-Marchman Center, which has specialized in the treatment of substance abusers for more than 20 years, will operate the facility which will hopefully be completed by Summer, 2008.

On the world scene, things have been difficult. The United States both today and during its history has been the last hope for so many of the world's people. While I share everyone's desire to bring our troops home as soon as possible from Iraq and other places of conflict, I refuse to undermine either our men and women in active military service or their Commander-in-Chief. Congress under our Constitution has two options relating to war – one to declare war and the other to appropriate funds for the war to be conducted. The Framers never intended 535 generals. While it is important that government representatives always have their rights to express their views and vote their conscience, in a time of conflict and with military personnel at risk in battle, I refuse to undermine those efforts.

Hopefully success can be achieved so that the next generation will live in a more peaceful world. No matter how you personally feel about the current situation, please remember in your prayers those who have served, who currently serve and their families.

As the work of the new Congress continues your comments and inquiries are always welcome. While this letter is only a quick review of a few of my activities and priorities, much more information is available at my website, www.house.gov/mica.

Thank you again for providing me the opportunity to represent you and so many others in the United States Congress.

With my regards and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Mica", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John L. Mica
Member of Congress