

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

July 4, 2006

Putnam County Residents
Florida's Seventh Congressional District

Dear Friends:

As your Representative in Congress, I wanted to provide a brief update on a number of Putnam County projects in which I have been involved and that may be of interest to you.

Putnam County faces a number of challenges dealing with expanding jobs and economic opportunities, as well as improving transportation and public safety. While a great deal of my time in Washington has been expended on national issues, my efforts continue to help bring a better life and future opportunity to those whom I represent.

It is important that, with the summer storm season once again here, we make certain Putnam County is prepared to deal with an unforeseen disaster or evacuation from coastal areas. We are continuing our efforts to assist Putnam County construct and secure equipment necessary for its new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Once completed, the EOC will function as a base of operations serving Putnam County during a disaster, using state-of-the-art communications systems to coordinate local emergency response teams with County, State and national officials and to facilitate the smooth flow of information to the public.

Improving educational opportunities for our Putnam youth is another top priority. One of our Putnam projects includes expanding educational scholarships with the Putnam County School Board. With private foundation assistance and by working with school officials, we have arranged for 12 Putnam County students to receive full college tuition scholarships.

Almost daily our students face the growing problem of drug and substance abuse. Putnam County, like many other American communities, has been challenged with illegal narcotics trafficking. With the assistance of community leaders, efforts are underway to counter the negative impact of drugs on our youth in Putnam County. Federal resources and support for drug education and prevention efforts in our area are being matched with locally generated private contributions. Federal, State and local agencies have been brought together to better coordinate law enforcement efforts in the Northeast Florida area.

Improving our local transportation both on U.S. 17 and with connecting highways is vital to our community and to future economic growth. The current two-lane segments of the road are a County-long bottleneck and an inadequate Emergency Evacuation Route. At my urging, the State has begun preliminary planning and is working to move this expansion project up on its future work plan. Congress has approved \$16 million in federal assistance, which will speed up preliminary design and engineering now scheduled for next year.

Getting around Putnam County without an automobile can be difficult. Over the past three years, Putnam has received a total of \$3.5 million in federal funding that will help secure new transit vehicles and expand service. We are also working to provide connecting service to Volusia, Flagler and St. Johns Counties and to the Jacksonville Transit Authority.

To help develop and maximize use of Palatka's Kay Larkin Municipal Airport and the adjacent Putnam County Business Park, we are helping to improve State Road 20 where it connects to State Road 100 via County Road 309-C. The route will also provide new access to the airport with a link to the St. Johns Avenue Extension road. In addition to regional economic benefits, the project will improve traffic circulation around the airport. Preliminary design & engineering have been completed, and both right-of-way acquisition and required permitting is proceeding.

Palatka's Kay Larkin Airport has begun various improvements to its infrastructure with the assistance of Federal Aviation Administration grants. Once the taxiway and facility improvements are in place over the next several years, federal assistance will permit the primary runway to be extended from the current 5,500 feet to 7,500 feet in length, which will expand economic potential, create additional jobs and address safety issues.

To assist seniors and veterans, we are also working on several other projects. Prior to the May 15th deadline for enrollment in the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, we contacted all seniors in the 7th Congressional District with information, conducted workshops and surveyed participants for their comments and suggestions. Today a majority of participating seniors have lowered their costs of medications and are pleased with their coverage. However, we must continue to bring down health care costs for all Americans. Finally, the St. Augustine Veterans Clinic has added facilities to accommodate our growing veterans population for both St. Johns and Putnam Counties.

Decent housing and affordable residences are important for all citizens and especially for our area seniors. A new senior housing residence and new neighborhood homes will replace the

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outdated public housing in our community. We have also succeeded in securing federal approval to allow Palatka City officials to replace the aging Frank George Apartments public housing high-rise on the waterfront. The City and Public Housing Authority are now working on a relocation plan for the residents of the high-rise, as well as an economic redevelopment project for downtown Palatka.

I was pleased again this year to welcome to Washington a number of community leaders from Putnam County who participated in our annual 7th Congressional District Fly-In. While in our nation's capital, participants received briefings by Congressional leaders and senior officials from the Administration. Special thanks to the Putnam County Chamber of Commerce and to all those who brought our community projects and priorities to the attention of federal officials.

While this brief update only touches on a few of the local projects in our community, I hope that you find it informative. Currently there are many important issues before Congress including immigration, tax reform, deficit spending, gas prices, national security and a host of matters vital to our future. Detailed information on my position and voting record relating to any of these national issues is available on the internet at www.house.gov/mica. You may also contact our Putnam County 7th Congressional District Office at (386) 328-6042 for assistance or information.

Please know that I always welcome your opinion and suggestions both on pending projects and national legislation. I hope you will not hesitate to contact me on matters concerning our community or issues pending before Congress.

With my regards and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John L. Mica
Member of Congress