



Congressman Adam H. Putnam

Contact Information

District 650 East Davidson Street Bartow, FL 33830 p. 863-534-3530 f. 863-534-3559

toll free: 1-866-534-3530

Washington 506 Cannon House Bldg Washington, DC 20515 p. 202-225-1252 f. 202-226-0585

Hillsborough County Information Line 813-272-5900

Hillsborough County Government Online www.hillsboroughcounty.org

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Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to update you on important developments during the 108th Congress that affect Hillsborough County.

As rapid growth continues, so do the challenges facing the Tampa Bay Region. Increased traffic congestion, overcrowded schools and a growing need for water resources affect each and every one of us. I want you to know that I'm tackling these and other issues of importance to you in Congress.

I hope that you find this information helpful, and that you will use my toll free Hillsborough Hotline at (866) 534-3530 should you have any questions or concerns about the issues you care about most, and return the card below to receive updates on these issues.

It is an honor to serve and represent you in the United States House of Representatives.

May God Bless America.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Adam H. Putnam

Adam H. Putnam Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Adam H. Putnam

Presorted Standard

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEES

GOVERNMENT REFORM

Chairman, Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census

AGRICULTURE

BUDGET

JOINT ECONOMIC

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.



A Congressional Update for Hillsborough County

Easing Congestion in Hillsborough County



Increasing transportation needs challenge the Tampa area.

The Hillsborough area faces increasing transportation pressures as congestion on our roads and highways throughout the region continues to grow. Adding to that

challenge, Florida receives approximately 86 cents in federal transportation dollars for every dollar it sends to Washington in federal gas excise taxes.

Unfortunately, the Transportation Equity Act (H.R. 3550) considered by the House of Representatives on April 2, 2004, actually reduces the funding guarantees to Florida to 82 cents for every dollar paid into the Highway Trust Fund by Florida drivers. This amounts to a \$360 million reduction from today's level, and for this reason I opposed "TEA-21" legislation as it currently stands.

In addition, I supported funding for key transportation priorities to the area, including funding for the I-4 /Cross Town connector to relieve heavy traffic along residential corridors and to the Port of Tampa, as well as other priority needs. I will continue to work vigorously to ensure that Florida receives a fair and equitable portion of federal transportation spending dollars.

Improving Hillsborough Area Water Supplies

The Tampa Bay area is home to approximately 2.5 million people and is rapidly growing. As a result, the regional water demand has increased significantly, placing stress on ground and surface water resources. The Tampa Bay Regional Reclaimed Water and Downstream Augmentation Project, for which I have secured federal assistance, will help to increase available water supplies while protecting ground and surface water resources.

program. As such, it is vitally important to the region's efforts to ensure environmental and water resource sustainability while maintaining sufficient water supplies for a healthy economy.



The City of Tampa's Hillsborough River Reservoir is 1,300 acres and can hold 1.6 billion gallons of water.

Similarly, I have supported efforts for federal assistance through Hillsborough County's Water Infrastructure and Supply Enhancement (WISE) Project. This initiative will assist in providing improved water supply and/or reclaimed water infrastructure improvements through a detailed assessment of the County's water resources and

identification of potential options for water supply and infrastructure improvements that will benefit the water supplies of the region.



Construction crews working on a new bridge and ramp from I-275 to eastbound I-4 (opened April 5, 2004).

Haley Center to Receive New In-Patient Bed Tower

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has just recently announced that it will build a new inpatient bed tower at the Tampa VA Medical Center.

This center, the James A. Haley VA Medical Center, is a 327 bed tertiary care teaching hospital, with 300 authorized nursing home care beds and is dedicated to providing the highest quality of patient care and services to veterans in Central Florida. While still an active medical center, it is aging and in need of significant upgrades. The addition of a new bed tower at the facility will resolve pressing infrastructure and safety issues. This hospital



The James A. Haley VA Medical Center will build a new in-patient bed tower to help provide quality medical care to veterans in Central Florida.

was activated in 1972 and is affiliated with the University of South Florida College of Medicine.

The announcement came as part of the VA's recently-released "Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services" (CARES) report of the veteran's health care system with recommendations for meeting current and future needs.

As outlined in this report, the VA will also construct a new medical center in Orlando to meet the growing needs of Central Florida's veterans, a population that is currently underserved. With an increasing number of veterans living and relocating to central Florida, it is important to increase VA medical resources for the area.

The VA is also in the process of identifying a site for establishing a new national cemetery in the Sarasota area and will evaluate the feasibility of opportunities within the site selection process.

### Base Closures Process Delayed (for now)



Hillsborough County is home to U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) shown here and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM).

A delay in the Department of Defense scheduled base closings means good news for MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

Congress previously authorized a Base Realignment And

Closures (BRAC) round for 2005, but on May 20, 2004, the House delayed the next round of military base closures until 2007 by a vote of 259 to 162. The matter is far from resolved, however, as the Senate voted not to delay the process. The differences between the House and Senate will be worked out in a conference committee.

To determine base closures, the Department of Defense (DoD) reviews the military's basing requirements in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which

sets out parameters for defense goals and needs, and examines existing military infrastructure and resources. As a result of the QDR, there will be a comprehensive review of defense and security needs that will help transform the military into a force more effectively aligned with changing defense needs.

Current BRAC law requires the Secretary of Defense to assess future threats, but does not require the Department of Defense (DoD) to retain the infrastructure and resources necessary to support a military that has been "surged" to meet those threats. To help ensure the military has sufficient resources, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 required the Defense Secretary to evaluate probable threats to national security and determine the surge requirements necessary to meet those threats. The conferees also required the Secretary to use this determination throughout the BRAC process.

The next round of BRAC will determine the future of MacDill Air Force Base. MacDill AFB provides many vital services to the military, including it's hosting of two important combatant commands, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). I am deeply committed to ensuring that the current role of the CENTCOM and SOCOM will continue to be at MacDill into the foreseeable future.

### Medicare Bill Helps Local Seniors and Hospitals

Last year, Congress passed a Medicare modernization package that will help thousands of seniors across Hillsborough County have access to prescription drugs, and provide local hospitals with increased funding to deliver higher quality healthcare to area residents.

Under this legislation, seniors will have more options and benefits under this 100% voluntary plan. In fact, the Medicare program was enhanced with additional benefits that will help millions of seniors across Florida and the nation. Many seniors do not have prescription drug coverage. They have been strapped with the high cost of prescription drugs and have often needed to make unacceptable sacrifices to gain access to the drugs they need, including skipping meals and going without certain utility services to help pay for medication. Under the new Medicare bill, seniors will finally have help with their prescription drug costs when this bill goes into effect in 2006, including 75% coverage up to \$2,250 in drug costs and catastrophic coverage if their drug costs exceed \$3,600.



Brandon Regional Hospital will receive almost \$2.8 million under the new Medicare Bill.

While these benefits begin in 2006, Medicare is offering seniors the ability to use a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount cards now to help alleviate the burden of their drug costs until the full Medicare coverage goes into effect. Seniors will have access to discounted drugs and will be able to choose the drug discount card that helps them the most. In addition, Medicare will offer new preventative benefits, including a physical exam and screening tests to find heart diseases and diabetes early. For more information on prescription drug coverage, the discount card,

or other Medicare-related issues, please call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

Under the Medicare Prescription Drug Act of 2003, hospitals will also be helped with increased funding. This bill contains the largest, most comprehensive package ever considered by Congress. It is sure to improve equality for our hospitals, helping to provide better access and quality healthcare for local citizens. In Hillsborough County, this amounts to almost \$5 million in gains, with Brandon Regional Hospital receiving \$2,792,948 and South Bay Hospital receiving \$2,066,296.

I am pleased this legislation makes vital improvements and modernizations to Medicare to provide seniors with prescription drug coverage and hospitals with additional resources to provide quality care for Hillsborough County residents.

### Increased Funding for Education in Florida

The 108th Congress made many positive improvements for local education, from increased Title I funding to grants for colleges in Hillsborough County.

While most funding for education occurs at the state and local level, the federal government issues some funding to help school districts across the country. The largest federal program supporting elementary and secondary education is Title I funding, which sent over \$39 million to the School District of Hillsborough County (SDHC), an increase of over 8% from the previous year. This money helps students and schools perform better by funding the programs and strategies that best help their students. The ability for schools and school districts to better manage and increase student performance came under the direction of the No Child Left Behind Act which sought to empower local schools and school districts to implement the programs and strategies that foster greater educational achievement for their students. With this law, enacted in 2002, Congress and the White House began a new era of education in our nation's history.

Accountability, local control and flexibility, new options for parents, and funding for what works are now the cornerstones of the education system. I am committed to helping local schools gain the resources they need to ensure higher-caliber education for the students in Hillsborough County.



The School District of Hillsborough County received \$39 million in Title I funding for FY 2004, an 8% increase from FY 2003.

The SDHC was not the only recipient of federal aid for education. Hillsborough Community College (HCC) also received nearly \$850,000 in Department of Education grants for FY 2003, which helped support several programs covering academic assistance and student services. In addition, HCC received \$250,000 in federal appropriated funding, approved by

*continued on page 3*

### Education, continued from page 2

Congress, to assist with start-up costs to develop a 73 credit hour Associate in Science degree program in Veterinary Technology. Currently, only three Florida schools provide an AS degree program for Veterinary Technicians in Florida. This program will provide significant opportunities for students to improve their skills in this area. I also recently requested additional funding for this program in the amount of \$750,000.



Hillsborough Community College received over \$1 million in Fiscal Year 2003 for several programs and services.

HCC also received \$500,000 in federal appropriated funding for its IT3 Program. The purpose of this training program is to increase the number of teachers prepared to effectively utilize IT methods and bring greater knowledge to teachers about technology career opportunities for their students. IT3 will also continue to develop and provide workshops and resources to community colleges. I recently requested \$500,000 to continue funding for this technology program.

As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census, I will continue to support the School District of Hillsborough County and Hillsborough Community College in their future endeavors. Both provide a valuable resource to the community.

### Putting Phosphogypsum to Work

On March 15<sup>th</sup> Chairman Putnam and his Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census conducted an oversight hearing at the Southwest Florida Water Management building in the 12th Congressional District to discuss the risks associated with phosphogypsum as well as its potential environmentally safe uses.

In 1989, the EPA promulgated a rule to prohibit the use of phosphogypsum, a byproduct of the chemical processing of phosphate rock, in any manner due to its concerns over low level emissions of radiation. Since the 1989 ban, phosphogypsum has continued to pile up at the rate of approximately 30 million tons per year. Currently, more than a billion tons of Phosphogypsum have accumulated in 24 stacks across Florida; 21 of those stacks are located in Central Florida. The near environmental disaster created when Mulberry Corporation abandoned the phosphogypsum stacks at Piney Point Phosphates in Manatee County brought attention to the fact that the piling of phosphogypsum in stacks is neither a safe nor effective means of disposal for this product.

In 2001, Mulberry Phosphates went bankrupt leaving unattended phosphogypsum stacks. The state of Florida was forced to take over the responsibility of monitoring water levels in the stacks and subsequently had to dispose of over 500 million gallons of treated water from the stacks into Bishop's Harbor and the Gulf of Mexico. This decision was based on the assumption that the discharge of treated water would be less environmentally harmful than a spill. According to Dick Eckenrod, Executive Director of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, "Managing the huge and ever-growing inventory of phosphogypsum

in Florida could reduce the volume of contaminated process water that will ultimately need to be disposed of... Options for beneficial use of phosphogypsum should be actively pursued along with the research needed to reasonably assure protection of public health and the environment."

Expert witnesses testified at the hearing regarding the great potential of phosphogypsum in many industries, such as agriculture as a soil amendment, road construction as a road base and landfills to help speed up the decomposition of waste. As the industry experts on phosphogypsum, the Florida Institute for Phosphate Research has provided sound scientific evidence showing that phosphogypsum can be used in a manner that is environmentally safe and economically beneficial.

At the hearing it was brought to light that the background documents supporting EPA's ban on phosphogypsum, while public record, have never been seen by anyone outside of EPA despite numerous requests by FIPR to receive such documents. EPA representatives agreed to provide this information and made a commitment to work closely with scientists at FIPR to evaluate the proposed uses of phosphogypsum and attempt to develop guidelines that would provide for such uses in a manner that is consistent with their mission of being protective of public health and the environment.



There are more than 24 phosphogypsum stacks across Florida.

### Tell Me What's Important to You!

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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- I would like to stay informed on these issues:
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  - Veterans
  - Small Business
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The most important issues and legislation Congress should focus on are: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Congressman Adam H. Putnam**  
506 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515