



2015 ALACHUA COUNTY STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Alachua County Commissioners:

Charles "Chuck" Chestnut IV - Chair

Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson - Vice-Chair

Lee Pinkoson • Mike Byerly • Ken Cornell

Dr. Lee A. Niblock - County Manager

Michele Lieberman - County Attorney

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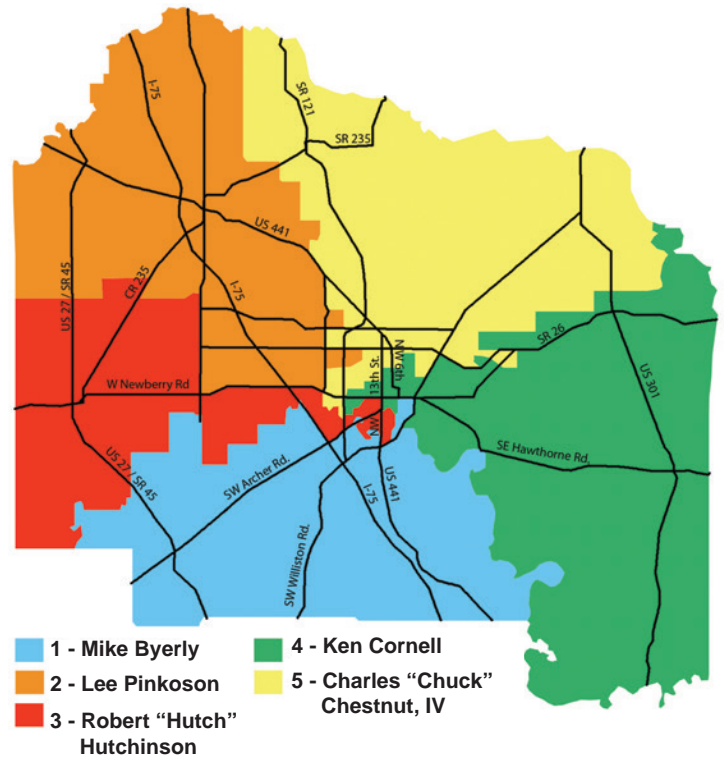
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners



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2015 Alachua County Legislative Priorities Summary

Local Bills

1. Empowerment Center Human Services Campus - Capital Project
2. Resource Recovery Park - Capital Project

Statewide Bills

1. Amendment 1 – Florida Water and Land Conservation
2. Juvenile Detention Cost Share
3. County Medicaid Costs/Acceptance of Federal Dollars for Medicaid Expansion
4. State Tax Reform/Main Street Fairness Act
5. Mental Health: Funding for Persons With Behavioral Health Issues or Disabilities
6. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Energy
7. Enterprise Zone Incentive Program
8. Florida Association of Counties Guiding Principles



2015 ALACHUA COUNTY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: LOCAL BILLS

1. EMPOWERMENT CENTER HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS CAPITAL PROJECT - \$700,000.00

Alachua County **SUPPORTS** the City of Gainesville's capital request for the Empowerment Health Center (EHC) at the former Gainesville Correctional Institute (GCI). This will provide access to healthcare services for all under-served residents in the Alachua County region. It is the next logical step in transforming the GCI to a true Human Services Campus.

The EHC will be designed and equipped to provide traditional medical, dental, and behavioral health services in a modern setting. The facility will incorporate current best practices for patient management, including electronic health records (EHR) and on-demand access. Professional staffing for medical, dental, and mental health services will be provided primarily by volunteer professionals in the community. Service availability will include evenings and weekend clinics. Additionally, safety net providers may offer access to non-traditional and ancillary healthcare services such as acupuncture, therapeutic massage, specialty medical clinics, and physical therapy.

Alachua County has a long and successful history of healthcare volunteerism and an active and interested Safety Net Collaborative.

When fully renovated, the EHC will be available for use by healthcare safety net providers in the community. The EHC supervisor will work closely with Safety Net Collaborative members to offer a meaningful scope of service to all eligible and under-served residents, thereby transforming the former GCI into a model Human Services Campus.



Request: \$700,000 to renovate the medical building and bring it up to ADA requirements.



2. ALACHUA COUNTY RESOURCE RECOVERY PARK \$1.12 Million

Request: \$1.12 million in economic development funds for infrastructure to support an innovative Resource Recovery Park in Alachua County Florida. This is a contribution to match the \$1.12 million in funding from the Alachua County Solid Waste Enterprise Fund.

SUMMARY

Economic innovation is a hallmark for Alachua County. Even during slow economic growth, large scale development, research, and biotech related enterprises have positioned Alachua County as one of the most dynamic innovation environments in the State of Florida. Leaders in Tallahassee and Washington have consistently played an important role in making our County a model for economic development. Building on this expertise, Alachua County will design a light manufacturing industrial park to recruit and grow waste-based industries.

The Resource Recovery Park will be designed to promote and attract private sector manufacturing jobs. The site is collocated with Alachua County's existing Leveda Brown Environmental Park and Solid Waste Transfer Station, and adjacent to the Airport Authority District. This industrial park model will host a collection of complementary industries and entrepreneurial companies which will process or manufacture products from recyclable and recovered materials in the regional waste stream.

The Resource Recovery Park will be a model for other Florida communities working to reach the State of Florida's goal of recycling 75% of waste by 2020. These operations will also open the opportunity for counties within this region of Florida to have a more viable local option for marketing recyclable materials.

The property is located in East Gainesville, an area which has been historically disadvantaged and under-served, despite multiple attempts by the community to provide opportunities for growth. Based on preliminary estimates from County staff, a regional population base of one million people could support "Waste to Reuse" operations, creating 300 jobs and generating millions for the local economy. These new jobs will create synergies for entrepreneurs and manufacturers fostered by the University of Florida's burgeoning innovation community.



2015 Alachua County Legislative Priorities: Statewide Bills

1. AMENDMENT 1 - FLORIDA WATER AND LAND CONSERVATION

- a. **SUPPORT** the reinstatement of funding to the State Land Acquisition Trust Fund to fully fund all the established Florida Forever programs. Protect the purpose of these programs: acquiring natural landscapes, working lands, historic and culturally significant sites, and protecting public access to recreational waterfronts.
- b. **SUPPORT** allocating 10% of the proceeds designated for land management, restoration, and improvements for nature-based recreation, to local governments, with the remaining 90% being allocated to the state land management agencies. This funding should be allocated to the locality on a proportional share based on the acreage or the value of lands each locality manages for conservation and nature-based recreation.
- c. To the extent that Amendment 1 funding is allocated to water resources projects, Alachua County **SUPPORTS** projects that demonstrate a high return on investment by yielding permanent and substantial net improvements such as reducing groundwater pumping, increasing aquifer recharge, increasing water flows and levels, and/or reducing pollutant loadings.
- d. **OPPOSE** the use of Amendment 1 to supplant current funding for beach renourishment, springs protection and other uses allowed in Amendment 1.

Florida Association of Counties Amendment 1 Policy

- a. **SUPPORT** a balanced distribution of funds for land acquisition and for water quality and quantity projects throughout the state, with equitable allocation irrespective of a project's urban or rural nature, or its coastal or inland location.
- b. **SUPPORT** land acquisitions of less than fee simple interest, thus reducing the cost to taxpayers while generating revenue, and allowing property owners to continue certain uses with negotiable terms.
- c. **SUPPORT** an allocation policy that involves local government participation in priority assessment and community impact.
- d. **OPPOSE** the use of Amendment 1 to supplant current funding for beach renourishment, springs protection and other uses allowed in Amendment 1.
- e. **SUPPORT** the continued funding of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund and the annual reserve for Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for ad valorem losses incurred as a result of water management district acquisition or charitable donation.
- f. **SUPPORT** the provision of PILT payments at a level that reflects current ad valorem revenues with adjustments to reflect any increase in property value in the future.



2. JUVENILE DETENTION COST SHARE

- a. **SUPPORT** the state taking full responsibility for funding and operation of detention facilities serving juveniles including pre-disposition and post-disposition days.
- b. **SUPPORT** implementing juvenile justice reform as recommended by the Detention Cost Share Proviso Workgroup. In the alternative:
- c. **SUPPORT** the funding percentage (approximately 32% for counties and 68% for the state) for secure detention as upheld by Florida's courts.
- d. **SUPPORT** allowing counties to pay actual costs on a monthly reimbursement basis.

3. COUNTY MEDICAID COSTS/ACCEPTANCE OF FEDERAL DOLLARS FOR MEDICAID EXPANSION

- a. **SUPPORT** continued evaluation of the county/state Medicaid cost-share arrangement, taking into consideration the impacts of state policies designed to contain growth in Medicaid costs, including statewide Medicaid managed care and diagnosis related group reimbursement for hospitals. Additionally, consider possible alternatives to the current arrangement, including but not limited to:
 - Alternative financing mechanisms;
 - Targeted local investment of the statutory county Medicaid contribution;
 - Allocation of state funds to reduce the cost-shift created by the implementation of an enrollment-based formula; and
 - Elimination of the unfunded mandate.
- b. **SUPPORT** establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under s. 409.915, F.S. to address the anticipated cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee based cost-sharing system.
- c. **SUPPORT** the acceptance of Federal Affordable Healthcare Act dollars for Medicaid expansion.



4. STATE TAX REFORM/MAIN STREET FAIRNESS ACT

SUPPORT tax reform measures that simplify administration and provide an economic boost to Florida's taxpayers while at the same time considering and minimizing the collective and cumulative negative impact on local revenues, including state shared and local discretionary revenue sources that are critical to local governments in providing community services.

Potential tax proposals that are of major concern to the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) include, but are not limited to:

a. Communications Services Taxes

SUPPORT amending and/or revising current law in a manner that: 1) is revenue neutral; 2) simplifies administration and collection of the current tax; 3) provides for a broad and equitable tax base; 4) provides for enhanced stability and reliability as an important revenue source for local government; and 5) provides the opportunity for market-based growth.

OPPOSE legislation that would revise current law in a manner that significantly reduces current local government-related revenues.

b. Sales Tax Exemption on Commercial Leases

OPPOSE legislation that would exempt state sales tax and local option sales tax on commercial leases.

c. Property Taxes – Elimination of “Recapture Provision”

OPPOSE legislation that would eliminate the existing recapture provisions in Florida Statute.

d. Local Discretionary Revenue Flexibility

SUPPORT modifications to existing laws governing local discretionary sales tax revenue sources to provide greater simplification, flexibility and more efficient administration and management.

e. Main Street Fairness Act

SUPPORT legislation that promotes an equitable and competitive environment between “Brick and Mortar” businesses and remote business establishments conducting business in Florida.



5. MENTAL HEALTH: FUNDING FOR PERSONS WITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES OR DISABILITIES

- a. **SUPPORT** appropriate funding for core mental health and substance abuse services.
- b. **SUPPORT** continued efforts to work through Medicaid reform initiatives to ensure that persons with substance abuse and mental health treatment needs are appropriately served.
- c. **SUPPORT** continued efforts to obtain Medicaid eligibility for persons incarcerated in county jails while waiting disposition of their cases.
- d. **SUPPORT** efforts to increase supportive housing, jail diversion, and employment and education initiatives for people with behavioral health issues and/or disabilities.

6. SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) ENERGY

- a. **SUPPORT** legislation that prioritizes solar installations. Installation of solar on rooftops, in parking lots, and on brownfields are preferable to installations over green fields.
- b. **SUPPORT** legislation that streamlines the permitting and regulatory processes for solar product manufacturers, installers, and consumers.
- c. **SUPPORT** legislation reducing burdensome regulations on solar manufacturers and products that hamper solar photovoltaic (PV) market penetration.
- d. **SUPPORT** legislation encouraging direct financing, tax refunds, rebates, or other economic incentives to encourage and facilitate solar PV energy use in residential and commercial properties.
- e. **SUPPORT** incentives to promote the use of solar power purchase agreements and solar leases. Additionally, the Board supports legislation strengthening local governments' ability to create voluntary energy financing districts.
- f. **SUPPORT** the expansion of existing net metering policies to allow for off-site or "virtual" net metering.
- g. **OPPOSE** any weakening of existing net metering policies.
- h. **SUPPORT** existing statutory authority for the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC).



7. Enterprise Zone Incentive Program

- a. **SUPPORT** legislation that reauthorizes the statewide Enterprise Zone Incentive Program.
- b. **SUPPORT** the expansion of the Enterprise Zone Incentive Program.

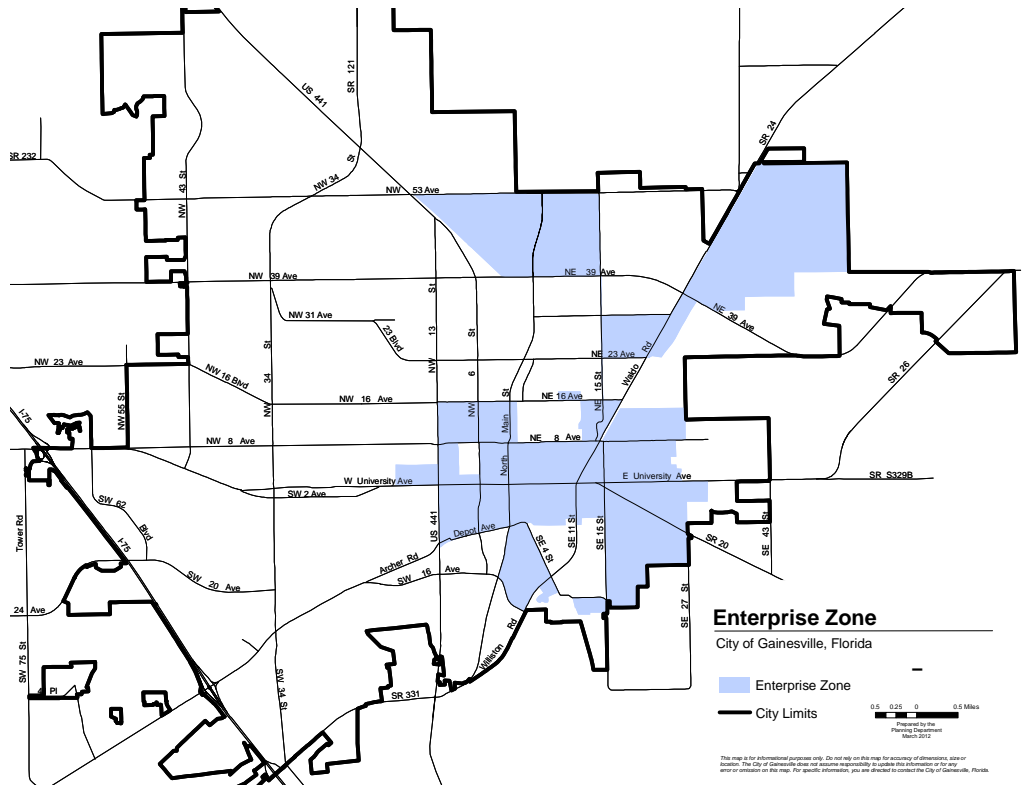
Alachua County has identified the Enterprise Zone Incentive Program as an essential tool for economic development to induce private sector investment. The University of Florida's Innovation Square, a recipient of Enterprise Zone Incentives, is a good example of the program's effectiveness.

This program provides incentives to new retail and commercial opportunities and diversifies the economy and tax base which leads to job growth and capital investment. The Enterprise Zone designations, if allowed to expand to other cities in Alachua County, will be part of a multi-layered incentive approach to implement economic development.

Alachua County is seeking legislative change providing municipal governments in Alachua County an opportunity to apply for an Enterprise Zone designation. This change enhances incentives for economic development, assisting the efforts to attract private investment.

The Qualified Target Industry (QTI) tax refund tool has been particularly effective for businesses in Alachua County's Enterprise Zone. Since 2008, six out of the fifteen companies that have received QTI funding have been located inside the City of Gainesville Enterprise Zone. These companies have a proposed impact of 755 new jobs, and a proposed capital investment of \$5.6 million dollars.

Expanding Enterprise Zones will assist outlying municipalities in Alachua County in broadening their economic base by inducing private sector investment in their urban core, which will lead to increased employment opportunities.





8. Florida Association Of Counties Guiding Principles

Alachua County is a member of the Florida Association of Counties (FAC). Alachua County participates in the FAC legislative policy setting process.

- a. **SUPPORT**, in general, the legislative priorities and key issue positions adopted by FAC. Throughout the legislative process, Alachua County will communicate our position on specific legislation and our concurrence or differences with the FAC position.
- b. **SUPPORT** the following FAC Guiding Principles:

Home Rule

County officials are dedicated to the preservation of democratic principles, specifically that the government closest to the people is the appropriate authority to serve the needs and requirements of the community. Home rule is the right of the people to determine and implement a public purpose at the grass roots level. Home rule power is conferred to Florida counties by Article VIII, Sections 1(f) and 1(g) of the Florida Constitution (1968), and by Section 125.01, Florida Statutes. The preservation of this fundamental democratic concept is essential to the operation of county governments in Florida. Accordingly, the Florida Association of Counties is dedicated to maintaining the integrity of county home rule power, both administrative and fiscal, which allows counties to develop and implement community-based solutions to local problems.

Unfunded Mandates

A state directive that compels local governments to provide a service, program, or benefit without providing the appropriate monies or a funding source is regarded as an unfunded mandate. County officials recognize that some state-funded mandates are justified because they achieve agreed upon statewide policy goals. However, many, if not most, mandates on counties are imposed without the consensus of local governments or the resources for implementation. Mandates drain the financial lifeblood from county governments and impede their ability to adequately deliver the fundamental services required by law. Mandates also compromise a county's ability to provide discretionary services requested by the local community. Thus, the Florida Association of Counties opposes any state or federal actions that limit the ability of local elected officials to make fiscal and public policy decisions for the citizens they represent. Furthermore, counties support the establishment of an agreed upon course of action whereby state and county elected officials deliberatively evaluate the appropriate funding and delivery of intergovernmental service responsibilities between counties and the state.



Community & Economic Development

The strength and vitality of local and state economies are built upon the foundation of infrastructure and services provided by county government. Furthermore, our economic prosperity rests on the stability of community leadership and the tools that are made available to county officials. Lastly, our community's quality of life requires even more cooperation and teamwork between public and private sectors. Therefore, counties need flexible tools to develop economic strategies that target local strengths, enhance and expand employment opportunities, and maintain adequate infrastructure. While economic development occurs primarily at a local and regional level, it is imperative that the state assists local communities by providing its resources through incentives, marketing and technical assistance. Accordingly, incentives at the state and local level should be based on need and provide for a return on public investments.

Revenue Flexibility

The ad valorem tax is authorized to Florida counties by Article VII, of the Florida Constitution, and implemented by general law. Within limitations, the Constitution authorizes counties to levy up to 10 mills on all taxable property for county purposes. This tax is the primary revenue source for the operation of county government. However, the revenue generated by this tax has not kept pace with the demands and requirements of modern government in a rapidly growing state. As a result, counties have to resort to other tax and non-tax revenue sources to meet their demands. The Florida Association of Counties is dedicated to protecting the integrity and fairness of the ad valorem taxing authority, as well as that of the other locally imposed revenue sources. Also, the Florida Association of Counties encourages the creation or enhancement of alternative public financing mechanisms to meet the ever-increasing demands on county government service delivery.

Finance & Taxation

The backbone of good government is financial accountability. For public officials to be accountable to taxpayers, the decision to tax should occur at the same level of government where the decision to enact a new program is made. County governments have a responsibility to raise the necessary revenues to finance a wide variety of critical, basic public services. Counties need a revenue base that adequately finances the services and programs required by the state, and the programs and services needed locally. If counties are to succeed in meeting their responsibilities, an adequate and fair local tax policy that is commensurate with the many responsibilities of modern county government must be developed.



Growth Management & Environmental Protection

The impact of growth and development in Florida during the last 30 years has brought significant benefits and costs to county government. Given Florida's substantial growth during this period, the Florida Association of Counties supports a comprehensive planning framework with state oversight, regional coordination, and minimum local requirements. At the same time, this planning framework must recognize that many local land use decisions result in little to no impact on state and regional interests. Furthermore, because Florida's communities are remarkably diverse, this planning framework must also allow maximum flexibility to Florida's counties to address unique local concerns and conditions. Thus, to the greatest extent possible, the state's comprehensive planning framework must defer to local decision-making and include an incentive-based approach to better growth management.

The Florida Association of Counties supports the right of county officials to responsibly perform their planning, police power, and other functions to address local issues at the local level. County officials must have the ability to make reasonable decisions for the advancement of the local community on zoning, comprehensive planning, and infrastructure issues without being subjected to prohibitive claims for damages for infringement on private property rights. Additionally, and consistent with counties' home rule powers, county officials must have the latitude to develop and impose revenue sources that allow growth to pay its fair share.

Conservation and protection of our natural resources is critical to managing growth, promoting economic development, and maintaining a healthy environment to ensure a high quality of life for county citizens. Accordingly, and in keeping with home rule authority, the Florida Association of Counties supports the right to adopt local environmental regulations to protect a community's unique natural resources.

Finally, increased demands on Florida's water supply are forcing many diverse interests to work with county governments to plan the future of water policy in Florida. In an effort to achieve the best possible result, county government should continue to expand partnerships with the agricultural community, urban water users, regional government agencies, and environmental organizations to encourage water conservation, water resources, and water supply development projects. The primary goal of such water resources planning efforts should be ensuring resource availability for all reasonable beneficial uses, consistent with the protection of water and related natural resources.



Human Services

County officials recognize the importance of adequately providing for quality human services to protect and assist citizens in need. Counties have demonstrated this commitment by providing preventive services, medical assistance, social and aging services, and housing assistance. While most human service programs and the laws that govern these programs are established by federal and state governments, many of these services are being provided through community-based services at the local level.

As a critical link in the federal/state/county human services partnership, counties must be included in formulating and implementing policies that protect the health, safety, and welfare of all the citizens of the state; allow for flexibility within communities to achieve the desired level of services based on local needs and priorities; and encourage the integration and coordination of human services.

Counties support expanding health care access and believe that efforts to refine and enhance state and local programs that provide access to affordable health care are essential. FAC supports limiting county funds expended under the Health Care Responsibility Act mandate for emergency room services as defined by law.

Additionally, emergency medical services (EMS) are a vital role of county government. FAC supports county commissions maintaining authority to issue certificates of public convenience and necessity at the county level to ensure countywide uniformity of the EMS system.

In addressing critical social services needs related to child welfare and long-term care, the Florida Association of Counties strives to increase state funding for child protective and dependency case services and other state-related programs. Furthermore, counties need the capacity to define local systems of care and increase funding flexibility by removing budget categories so that monies can be directed locally to meet community needs.

The Florida Association of Counties supports enhancing the state funding for elder and long-term care services and directing existing funding from institutional care to community-based care programs such as Community Care for the Elderly, Home Care for the Elderly, Medicaid Waiver, Alzheimer's Disease Initiative, Senior Centers and the Assisted Living Waiver programs, respectively.

Availability of services and funding in the area of behavioral health are also important to our county officials. The Florida Association of Counties supports the establishment of integrated systems of care for individuals with co-occurring behavioral and physical health problems in addition to efforts to enhance prevention and intervention services for children and families to divert children from the child welfare system. The Florida Association of Counties believes that developing a comprehensive services act of mandatory planning, development, funding, implementation and evaluation of mental health and substance abuse services for elder Floridians is also necessary to ensure continuity of care.

Given the varying capacity and funding capabilities of counties, the Florida Association of Counties supports adequate federal and state funding to ensure uniformity in the human services continuum.



Public Safety & Security

Protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the citizenry are of paramount importance to county officials. County governments have a long tradition of ensuring the public's safety and security through operating county emergency management centers, providing fire and rescue services, and assisting in funding the state's court system, sheriffs' offices, juvenile programs, victims' assistance, and the jail system in each county.

Florida's citizens and visitors look to county government as the first line of defense to ensure their communities are safe and protected in times of natural and man-made disasters, terrorism, emergencies, and public health threats. It is imperative for state policy to maintain county government control of emergency management systems during such emergencies and public health threats. It is equally important that as Florida's population continues to grow, the state provide a dedicated funding source for hurricane shelter space.

It is only through a county partnership with the other levels of government that a full-scale comprehensive and coordinated approach may be taken to address crime and public safety problems. It is of the utmost importance to maintain and seek out open lines of communication between all parties involved to ensure the public's safety and security. Adequate resources must be in place so counties are in the strongest position to protect their communities. Increased funding for security enhancements are needed to support measures which include, but are not limited to, airports, seaports, public buildings, public health infrastructure, and preparedness training for emergency personnel. Increased federal and state funding is essential to ensure that effective public safety systems are provided throughout Florida.

Since 1972, statutory changes and case law have expanded county court-funding responsibilities to include an ever-increasing multitude of costs. Those costs include providing office space for judges, public defenders, and state attorneys, expert witness fees, court appointed counsel costs, and many other related expenditures. Accordingly, the Constitutional Revision Commission proposed Revision 7 to require the State of Florida to fund a larger portion of the state court system, allowing counties to more ably meet local needs. That constitutional revision was approved by the Florida voters in 1998.

Since 1998, the Florida Legislature has been implementing the constitutional revision, having completed that initial process on July 1, 2004. Some elements of the state court system have remained a county responsibility. For some of those responsibilities, the Legislature has provided some revenue sources but these sources are grossly inadequate. The revenue from ad valorem taxes still funds a significant portion of the county's mandated share of the operation of the state court system.

The counties' long-held policy is that the funding of the state court system is the responsibility of the state. County funding of the state's courts causes ad valorem taxes, intended to fund programs truly local in nature, to be used for state programs over which counties have no control or accountability. Accordingly, the Florida Association of Counties opposes the use of local revenue sources to fund the state's judicial responsibilities and supports the continued implementation of Article V, Section 14 of the Florida Constitution, its language and intent, which provides for a more equitable manner of court funding.



“Solitude on Newnans Lake” photo by Alachua County
Environmental Protection Department Senior Planner
Michael Drummond