Charlotte County, Florida
2026 Federal Legislative Agenda

Prepared by Thorn Run Partners for the

Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners

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January 2026

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Transportation and Infrastructure

Harborview Road, Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange & Heavier, Longer Trucks **17**

Support federal funding for the Harborview Road expansion project. **Support** planning efforts to advance the Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange project and other critical road projects in Charlotte County. ***Oppose*** federal increases in truck weight or lengths that may endanger public safety and cause increased infrastructure damage.

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Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Program Urban County Qualification **22**

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Support legislation and federal rulemaking efforts to restore pretrial detainee access to federal benefits. ***Support*** congressional action to fully repeal the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy and codify recent CMS administrative reforms.

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Support legislation to expand and improve the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

Assessment of Fair Housing Rule **27**

Monitor implementation of the HUD Assessment of Fair Housing Rule.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Hurricane Recovery

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In the last several years, Charlotte County has been significantly impacted by Hurricanes Ian (2022), Helene and Milton (2024), and subsequent severe weather events, creating compounding recovery and resilience needs. Since then, Congress has provided several infusions of federal funding to help recover from a litany of natural disasters nationwide.

Charlotte County has a signficant needs for recovery assistance. After a disaster, these include debris removal, rebuilding of affordable housing, repair of public infrastructure, and economic recovery, to name a few. The federal government provides assistance through a variety of different programs; this fragmented system means the County must deal with a myriad of federal agencies as well as coordinate with state and local partners.

FEMA Public Assistance Reimbursements
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assists local governments, through the state, after disasters with funding for debris removal and recovery projects. This funding follows a specific process where counties seek reimbursement through the State Division of Emergency Management and FEMA for projects. It is essential that these reimbursements are processed in a timely manner to ensure the fiscal stability of the County. Charlotte County submits millions of dollars in project worksheets and needs the timely enagement of FEMA and the Florida Department of Emergency Management to recover.

Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program
The Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program is among the most flexible funding available through the federal government to help communities recover from disasters. Once Congress has appropriated funding after a disaster, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will use a formula to determine allocations between jurisdictions that have been impacted by the disasters covered in that particular appropriation, which are then published in the Federal Register. The funds allocated to any jurisdiction in Florida are administered by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO).

Charlotte County is seeking Urban County entitlement status and urges HUD to ensure counties experiencing repeated disasters are not disadvantaged by outdated population or impact thresholds.

Community Development Block Grant Mitigation Funds
Congress created the CDBG-MIT program after disasters of 2016 and 2017, leaving much of the implementation up to HUD and individual states to ultimately disburse. After Congressional appropriations, HUD notifies Florida that it will receive CDBG-MIT money for disaster events that occurred during a specific time period. Then, HUD releases a Federal Register notice to formally disburse the funds to eligible states, once states submit individual State Action Plans. Once HUD approves a State Action Plan, Florida will be able to access and spend the funding. Congress has not provided CDBG-MIT funding since 2019 for 2018 storms, thereby not providing such funds to Florida after the storms that impacted Charlotte County, leaving the County unable to access them.

NRCS EWP
The Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program that is used to remove marine debris after natural disasters. While the NRCS EWP program may be a critical resource for Charlotte County, it may only partially solve canal debris and sediment challenges of the County and greater region. Applicants typically go through an arduous and expensive process to secure funding for even a partial cleanup of marine debris. Further, the process for NRCS to approve or reject individual canals often takes too long given that the intent is to protect an area from future storm damage

and flooding. Ultimately, the EWP program may only approve canals for cleanup if hydrologic conditions are impacted by debris, thereby ignoring the environmental degradation of any debris remaining in nearshore waters.

Despite the federal government's clear recognition that marine debris after a storm is a serious problem that deserves federal support, programs in existence do not appropriately deal with debris under water. For example:

- Funding to Coast Guard programs is meant to respond to derelict vessels.
- FEMA's funding can remove marine debris, but their criteria is limited only to navigational hazards, meaning that they will only address limited depths and will not remove all debris present.
- NOAA funding can address marine debris, but they have limited funding and focus on environmental hazards.

FEMA will pay to remove all land-based debris that sits above the water line. Yet, in coastal communities throughout the country, whose waterways are as important as roads or other public infrastructure, there is not a similar program that is all-encompassing and as thorough for marine debris. This inequity may need to be by Congress, either by appropriately refocusing and adjusting the NRCS EWP program or by developing a new program to comprehensively address marine debris.

<u>POSITION</u>: ***Support*** recovery efforts from recent hurricanes Ian, Helene, and Milton, including FEMA reimbursements, funding for Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery and Mitigation Programs (CDBG-DR and CDBG-MIT), Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Army Corps of Engineers, the Natural Resource Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection program, and other programs of importance to Charlotte County. ***Support*** legislative or administrative changes to expand eligibility for submerged and nearshore marine debris removal across FEMA, NRCS, and NOAA programs. ***Support*** the timely release of federal funding.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Federal Emergency Management Agency Reform

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In mid-April, the Administration implemented changes to FEMA's response to disasters, some of which are significant. They include:

- Increase the disaster deductible per capita threshold for entire states, from $1.89 to $7.56 per person.
  - Minimum damage threshold for Florida would now be ~$176M.
  - Smaller disasters would be left to states and local governments.
  - FEMA may also consider size of state economies, leading to an even higher threshold for states like Florida.
- Federal cost shares should not exceed 75%, as mandated in the Stafford Act, but which were routinely increased by prior administrations.
- Deny Category G – recreational facilities PA funding for "non-critical facilities," including beach nourishment projects.
- Stop approving new allocations of HMGP funding.
- Cancellation of BRIC, despite its creation by Congress, formerly the preeminent federal program for resilience.

Combined, these changes will have significant impacts on states like Florida when future disasters occur. Meanwhile, the FEMA Review Council abruptly cancelled its final meeting, where they were to release their proposals for agency changes. They could still release recommendations, including legislative text necessary to implement proposed changes.

Conversely, many in Congress want to further codify and strengthen FEMA's missions to preserve the agency, while making targeted improvements. For example, the leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee introduced and passed out of committee the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act. Among other things, the bill aims to rebuild public infrastructure more quickly after storms, expedite debris removal, improve damage assessments, and address the backlog of open disaster declarations. The bill also supports federal pre-disaster mitigation funding.

Finally, Congress may pass a bipartisan spending package for Fiscal Year 2026 that would significantly constrain the Administration's ability to restructure or weaken FEMA. Notably, the legislation, among other things:

- Requires FEMA to maintain staffing levels sufficient to fulfill its statutory missions, directly countering administration proposals for significant workforce reductions
- Prohibits the closure of any of FEMA's 10 regional offices
- Requires FEMA to publicly explain any criteria (written or unwritten) used to approve or deny governors' disaster requests
- Requires public reporting on the status of state reimbursement requests
- Renews support for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program

POSITION: ***Monitor*** potential changes to FEMA to ensure assistance for Charlotte County and Florida should a disaster occur. ***Oppose*** the change of federal cost shares and/or disaster deductibles. ***Support*** faster access to Public Assistance funding. ***Support*** improvements to housing programs to more quickly help residents. ***Support*** expedience, predictability, and transparency of FEMA processes.

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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

FEDERAL ISSUE: Charlotte County, FL Shoreline and Inlet Management

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Over the past several years, Charlotte County's beaches on Manasota Key have eroded to the point where the County has declared numerous emergencies to help with permitting and other homeowner challenges.

To address erosion, the Army Corps of Enginers completed a Chief of Engineers report on 29 June 1981 in response to a House Public Works Committee Resolution adopted 2 December 1971. However, in 1981, the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners withdrew support for the project, thereby effectively ending substantive work.

Given the County's recent challenges and the work completed by the Corps in the past, the County has successfully worked to have the Corps initiate a new study of the shoreline, focusing primarily on those areas recommended for a project in 1981. These include beach erosion control improvements along 3.9 miles beginning at Stump Pass and extending northward to the Sarasota County Line (along Manasota Key), including the Port Charlotte Beach State Recreational Area. At the time, the project had a benefit-cost ratio of 4.2, with initial placement of approximately 335,000 cubic yards (CY) and five-year nourishment intervals of approximately 68,000 CY each. Finally, a 1,250-foot long terminal groin was recommended to be constructed at the south end of the beach fill along Stump Pass. Sand was proposed to have come from an offshore borrow area.

The Charlotte County study is authorized via Statute 69-132, Chapter 140, Public Law 84-71 - June 15, 1955.

In its final Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill, Congress provided $500,000 to the Army Corps of Engineers – and most importantly, a "new start" – for the Corps to initiate a study of the Charlotte County shoreline. More recently, Congress provided an additional $500,000 to the study in two additional fiscal years (FY24 and FY25).

The Corps hopes to complete the Chief of Engineers report in June 2027, after which the project will be eligible for a construction authorization via the Water Resources Development Act, hopefully to be passed in 2028.

Easement Issues
Under the Biden Administration, the Corps of Engineers determined that federal beach projects must have what are known as perpetual easements for construction and public access from all individual property owners along the length of a coastal storm risk management project to proceed to construction. This is a different interpretation than has been used in the past and has placed the future of the federal shore protection program in Florida – including the pending project in Charlotte County – at risk because getting these easements from individual property owners can be difficult.

Temporary language relating to shore protection easement issues was included in the 2024 Water Resources Development Act. While the language may not solve all of the problems with perpetual easements, it is easier to amend existing language in the future rather than insert new language, meaning there is a pathway to make further tweaks as necessary in future WRDA bills. Charlotte County supports additional clarifications to ensure shore protection projects are not delayed by impractical easement requirements.

POSITION: ***Support*** additional funding for the Charlotte County, Manasota Key beach nourishment project to complete a federal feasibility study. ***Support*** further WRDA language to standardize easement requirements nationwide. ***Support*** a new administrative interpretation of perpetual easements.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Charlotte Harbor Conservation; Central Sewers

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: The health of Charlotte Harbor is critical to the future of Charlotte County. A significant issue that threatens the Harbor is the need to transition residents from older, often failing septic systems to central sewers.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that over the next 20 years, the nation must collectively invest $390 billion to update or replace existing wastewater systems and build new ones to meet increasing demand. This is an issue that affects the whole country, but in Charlotte County, fewer than 60,000 residents are on central sewer.

Many of the County's homes are within 150 feet of waterways that flow into Charlotte Harbor, necessitating that residents will ultimately need to be on central sewer. The County is currently completing the fourth phase of this project. In addition to taking advantage of State Revolving Funds and tax assessments, the County is pursuing funding for additional phases of this environmentally significant project.

In the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) appropriations process, Congress provided the Ackerman septic to sewer project with $3.2 million in funding.

In a related effort, to potentially provide the County with additional federal assistance for its efforts, Congress via the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 amended the County's exiting Army Corps of Engineers "environmental infrastructure" authorization that had yet to be utilized to support the ongoing septic to sewer conversion project. The bill language is as follows:

> *CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA.—Section 219(f)(121) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 (106 Stat. 4835; 113 Stat. 336; 121 Stat. 1261) is amended by striking ''$3,000,000 for'' and inserting ''$33,000,000 for wastewater and''.*

Given this language, the County can seek federal funding via the Corps of Engineers to implement this provision via the annual Energy & Water appropriations bill.

By providing a long-term solution to significantly reduce non-point source pollutants into the receiving waters of Charlotte Harbor, the ability to support economic activities dependent on water quality will improve with the reduction/elimination of beach closures, sanitary health hazard complaints, and related impacts of nutrient and sediment loading. Removal of septic systems will increase the amount of developable land for businesses and provide for a larger variety of uses. Improving water quality will retain and increase tourism. Lastly, a continuation of the cooperative effort between public, private, and nonprofit organizations will continue the enforcement of water quality regulations and Best Management Practices.

POSITION: ***Support*** federal funding for the Charlotte County sewer system expansion.

FEDERAL ISSUE: National Flood Insurance Program

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In 1968, Congress established the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to address the nation's flood exposure and challenges inherent in financing and managing flood risks in the private sector. Private insurance companies at the time claimed that the flood peril was uninsurable and, therefore, could not be underwritten in the private insurance market. A three-prong floodplain management and insurance program was created to identify areas across the nation most at risk of flooding, minimize the economic impact of flooding events through floodplain management ordinances, and provide flood insurance to individuals and businesses.

In mid-2012, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Act (BW12), a 5-year reauthorization of the NFIP that attempted to restore the program to firmer financial footing by making changes to the program that impacted the County's residents. Then, in early 2014, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act (HFIAA), was enacted to address some of the so-called unintended consequences of BW12. While HFIAA delayed many of the premium increases implemented by BW12, the only real difference between rate increases envisioned by the two bills is that HFIAA reinstated grandfathering. This provision, originally ended by BW12, allows property owners to pay flood insurance rates based on original risk, not that which is determined by new community flood maps.

In Charlotte County, there are roughly 35,000 NFIP policies for both homes and commercial properties.

Risk Rating 2.0

FEMA continues to implement the Risk Rating (RR) 2.0 pricing methodology. Rate increases are limited by law to a maximum of 18 percent per year, meaning that increases are phased in over many years. Upon repeated calls for increased transparency relating to RR 2.0, FEMA released more specific County and zip code information relating to the "risk-based cost of insurance versus the current cost of insurance" for single-family homes as of 2022.

For Charlotte County, the data relating to the implementation of RR2 indicates the following expected price changes per year for participants in the NFIP: about 5% of County NFIP participants will see a decrease in their flood insurance rates while about 80% will see an increase of less than $20 per year. The remaining will face more significant increases. While Risk Rating 2.0 has reduced premiums for some policyholders in Charlotte County, a majority continue to experience incremental increases, raising concerns about long-term affordability and participation.

Community Rating System Potential Changes

As of July 2024, there were 4.65 million National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policies in force nationwide, including 1.7 million in Florida, by far the highest number in any state. More than 3.5 million of those policies benefit from discounts provided by the Community Rating System (CRS) due to the participation of 1,500 communities in the program nationwide. Charlotte County participates in the CRS program, achieving a Class 5 rating and a 25% discount for its NFIP policyholders.

Over the past several years, the CRS discount program has received enhanced criticism, with the Government Accountability Office arguing in 2023 that the discounts "are not actuarially justified" and "are not closely linked to potential loss reduction." For example, activities that earn community discounts, such as public information, and flood mapping and warnings – both of which are recognized as being important – “do not reduce the potential for flood damage” to insured properties.

FEMA last sought public comment on the CRS program in 2021 and received feedback from a variety of floodplain managers, environmental groups, and local governments, with some urging that the program be abolished or overhauled. Some even questioned whether the CRS program is needed given the NFIP's current pricing approach (RR 2.0), which claims to calculate actuarially based premiums based on true risk.

Current Status: “CRS Redesign”
More recently, FEMA sought additional public comment on their “CRS Redesign,” including “ways it can improve” the rating system by encouraging “measurable actions” to reduce flood risk and efforts to encourage people to buy flood insurance. FEMA is considering changes such as finding new ways beyond discounts to encourage communities to improve flood protection and “reducing the number of activities” for which communities can earn points. FEMA will invite additional public comment on concrete proposals before finalizing any changes, which could take a year or more.

In short, FEMA could reduce the number of activities and elements, on the one hand “streamlining” requirements, but also potentially reducing the activities for which a community could receive a discount. Changes to the Community Rating System could materially impact policyholders in Charlotte County and should reward proven loss mitigation and resilient infrastructure investments.

POSITION: ***Support*** efforts to improve the National Flood Insurance Program for the benefit of all participants. ***Support*** affordability protections within NFIP reauthorization efforts. ***Monitor*** FEMA’s implementation of the Risk Rating 2.0 program and potential changes to the Community Rating System.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Everglades Restoration

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In 2000, Congress authorized a 30-year plan, termed the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), for the restoration of the Everglades ecosystem in southern Florida. CERP generally focuses on increasing the storage of excess water in the rainy season to provide more water during the dry season for the ecosystem and for urban and agricultural users. When originally authorized, it was estimated that CERP would cost a total of $8.2 billion and take approximately 30 years to complete. More recent estimates indicate the plan may take 50 years to implement and could cost $13.5 billion.

The construction of water control structures and facilities within the Everglades throughout the 20th century has altered the natural hydrologic patterns of water in the region. Over time, this has changed the ecosystem of the connected coastal regions.

The Everglades restoration effort has seen significant progress in recent years. Several projects outlined in CERP have been completed or are nearing completion. For instance, the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) has begun to improve water quality in the state. Another major project, the C-43 Reservoir is under construction. This project aims to store water to reduce discharges of polluted water into the Caloosahatchee river and nearby estuaries. The EAA Reservoir is under construction, while decompartmentalization projects and the Tamiami Trail modified water delivery project are complete.

More than $3 billion in federal funding has been provided for the Everglades program in the last four fiscal years, some of which is from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Meanwhile, the most recent Water Resources Development Act of 2024 authorized additional Everglades projects of importance, including the Lake Okeechobee Component A Storage Reservoir (LOCAR) project.

Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual Update

The Army Corps of Engineers released a Final Draft Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) Water Control Plan in 2023. The regulation schedule regulates the management of Lake levels. As a part of this process, the Corps hosted several public meetings in Florida and accepted written comments multiple times. Since completion of the draft report, the Corps and the federal resource agencies have been working to address concerns that the new LOSOM plan will negatively impact certain endangered species.

The updated LOSOM began to be implemented in 2024 and now dictate operations on Lake Okeechobee for the next decade, but the real impact of these changes will take time to fully manifest. LOSOM is expected to significantly reduce (but not end) harmful discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries at most lake stages. It's also the first Lake O plan ever to acknowledge the need to send additional clean water south to the Everglades. That said, LOSOM still allows for harmful discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries when Lake O climbs above 16.5-17 feet. Next steps involve continued monitoring and reporting on how the revised operating manual affects water quality, lake levels, and ecosystem health and further optimization of the plan, including coordination with new Everglades restoration projects, like the EAA Reservoir.

POSITION: ***Support*** adequate funding for Everglades restoration. ***Support*** continuing implementation of all facets of Everglades restoration. ***Monitor*** the implementation of the new Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Water Quality and Red Tide

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Nearly ever year, Charlotte County and much of the southern Gulf Coast of Florida are impacted by significant levels of the algae *Karenia Brevis*, commonly known as red tide. Outbreaks of red tide off the Florida coast have been documented since Spanish explorers first began visiting the area in the 15th century, however, a 2007 study that was conducted by the University of Miami and funded by the National Institutes of Health found that the levels of red tide have significantly increased over the past fifty years. The study found that levels of red tide measured in the area from Tampa Bay to Sanibel Island between 1994 and 2002 is thirteen to eighteen times the levels measured between 1954 and 1963. The increase in the nutrient levels in the ecosystem was found to be a significant factor in this increase.

In reaction to the ongoing outbreaks of red tide, both the state and federal government have taken action to mitigate the impacts to the local ecosystem and economy. Members of the Florida delegation have requested emergency declarations and requested additional funding to various federal agencies and others to study, mitigate, and respond to harmful algal blooms. The Florida delegation also worked to include several other provisions in the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill and the Interior and Environment appropriations bill to address harmful algal blooms.

The water quality in the Gulf also affects the water near the shores of Charlotte County. Other sources of nutrients and pollution, such as the Mississippi River delta also contribute to the overall ecosystem in the Gulf. The Mississippi River watershed stretches north into Canada, west to Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico, and east to North Carolina, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. This broad drainage basin creates challenges for determining and addressing causes of pollution that enters the Gulf.

POSITION: ***Support*** research and monitoring programs to address red tide. ***Support*** efforts to improve water quality for all water entering the Gulf, including from the coast of Florida and other tributaries, such as the Mississippi River.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Waters of the United States

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Congress enacted the Clean Water Act (CWA) in 1972 with the statutory objective "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." One of the Act's principal tools in achieving that objective is a prohibition on the discharge of pollutants from a point source to "navigable waters," which are defined in the Act as "the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas." Thus, "waters of the United States" (WOTUS) is a threshold term establishing the geographic scope of federal jurisdiction under the CWA.

For the past two decades, the WOTUS rule has been in a state of flux due to changes in administration and court rulings.

As of late 2023, the Biden administration had finalized a new version of the WOTUS rule to replace the narrower definition adopted under the first Trump administration. The Biden rule expanded protections to more wetlands and waterways, including ephemeral streams and wetlands adjacent to larger bodies of water, which were excluded in the Trump version.

However, this new rule faced significant legal challenges. In May 2023, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Sackett v. EPA* that limited the scope of federal jurisdiction over wetlands, ruling that only wetlands with a "continuous surface connection" to larger bodies of water could be regulated by the EPA. This decision directly impacted the implementation of the Biden-era WOTUS rule, potentially narrowing the definition further.

Following the Sackett decision, the EPA and Department of the Army announced a joint memorandum in early 2025 issuing guidance to field staff on implementation of "continuous surface connection" consistent with the Supreme Court's ruling. In late 2025, under the 2nd Trump administration, the EPA and the Army Corps announced a proposed rule to revise the definition of "waters of the United States" to further implement the Supreme Court's decision in Sackett v. EPA. This proposed rule represents a significant narrowing of federal CWA jurisdiction.

Key Provisions of the Proposed Rule:

- "Relatively Permanent" Defined: The term is defined as "standing or continuously flowing bodies of surface water that are standing or continuously flowing year-round or at least during the wet season," which is intended to exclude surface waters resulting from precipitation.
- "Continuous Surface Connection" Defined: It requires wetlands to be both touching jurisdictional water and having a surface connection during the wet season, which will likely result in fewer wetlands being covered under the CWA.
- Interstate Waters: The rule removes "interstate waters" as an independent basis for CWA jurisdiction—interstate waters must fall within the enumerated list of WOTUS to be covered.
- Groundwater Excluded: The proposed rule explicitly excludes groundwater from WOTUS.

Current Status (January 2026)

- Comment Period Closed: The public comment period for the November 2025 proposed rule closed on January 5, 2026. The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers are now reviewing submitted comments.
- Split Jurisdiction: The regulatory landscape is currently fractured. The revised 2023 rule is in effect in 24 states, while the other 26 states are challenging it, and EPA and the Army Corps are using the pre-2015 definition of WOTUS in these states.

What to Expect
The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers are expected to publish a final revised WOTUS rule sometime in 2026 after reviewing public comments. However, legal challenges are anticipated once the final rule is issued, meaning the regulatory landscape will likely remain in transition. The definition of what constitutes WOTUS continues to evolve through both regulatory action and judicial interpretation.

POSITION: ***Monitor*** activity related to the Waters of the U.S. rule. ***Oppose*** aspects of the rule that would negatively affect Charlotte County.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Energy Exploration

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Active energy drilling currently occurs in both the western and central Gulf as well as in other parts of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

In 2020, during his first term, President Trump signed a memorandum withdrawing the eastern Gulf and Atlantic coast of Florida from exploration, development, or production of energy through June 30, 2032. The memorandum also covers the Atlantic coast of Georgia and South Carolina and was later expanded to include the coast of North Carolina.

In early 2025, just weeks before leaving office, President Biden indefinitely blocked oil and gas drilling off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, in the eastern Gulf, and in much of the United States' corner of the Arctic Ocean. These areas host very little OCS drilling currently, although various attempts have been made over the past few decades to allow seismic testing and/or leases in some areas now blocked. Biden's withdrawal covered more than 625 million acres of ocean.

Upon returning to office, President Trump issued an executive order attempting to revoke President Biden's 2025 withdrawal memoranda, seeking to reopen these protected areas to future oil and gas drilling.

Multiple lawsuits were filed immediately challenging Trump's authority to revoke Biden's protections. Many groups argue that while the OCS Lands Act allows presidents to withdraw areas from drilling, it does not explicitly authorize presidents to revoke prior withdrawals. A federal court reached this same conclusion during Trump's first term when he attempted to undo Obama-era protections for the Arctic Ocean and portions of the Atlantic Ocean. Using the same logic, in mid-2025 a federal court struck down Biden's order to withdraw 625 million acres of federal waters, finding that he exceeded his authority.

BOEM's Draft 5-Year Offshore Leasing Program (November 2025)
In late 2025, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) released a draft proposed program for offshore oil and gas leasing for the 2026-2031 period. The proposal represents a dramatic expansion from the Biden-era program, which included only three lease sales (all in the western or central Gulf) for 2024-2029.

The new plan includes 7 lease sales in the Gulf, 21 in Alaska, and 6 in California. One of the most controversial elements is a new planning area called the "South-Central Gulf," which includes waters off Florida's coast beginning approximately 100 miles from shore. Lease sales in this area could begin as early as 2029, though BOEM stated it intends to honor Trump's 2020 moratorium through June 30, 2032.

Charlotte County submitted comments to BOEM opposing offshore drilling off the coast of Florida, including in the eastern Gulf. Meanwhile, the entire Florida Congressional delegation remains opposed to drilling off the coast of Florida.

Next Steps
BOEM will review public comments and release a final five-year program, possibly sometime in 2026. However, legal challenges are virtually certain regardless of the final decision, meaning the regulatory landscape will likely remain in flux for the foreseeable future.

POSITION: ***Oppose*** the expansion of fossil fuel energy exploration in and around Florida.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Transportation Issues: Harborview Road, Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange & Heavier, Longer Trucks

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY:

Harborview Road

The Harborview Road project is a critical ongoing project remains short of funding for full completion. The project, which is an evacuation route and is part of the State Transportation Improvement Program and the Transportation Improvement Program, will widen Harborview Road in Charlotte County from two to four lanes between Melbourne Street, near U.S. Highway 41 (Tamiami Trail) and I-75, a distance of 2.3 miles.

Harborview Road is a key major east-west roadway that needs to become a four-lane divided roadway. This improvement is necessary to accommodate travel demand generated by population and economic growth in Port Charlotte and Charlotte County. The project will improve an existing traffic bottleneck along Harborview Road, improve substandard roadway design elements, boost transportation network connectivity, increase operational conditions of the road, bolster the road as a freight distribution route, improve safety conditions, improve local water quality, and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic along the corridor. Currently, Harborview Road is a two-lane undivided roadway classified as an urban minor arterial with 12-foot travel lanes, no paved shoulders, and an open drainage system with no pedestrian or bicycle facilities.

The total project cost estimate for Segments I and II is $123 million, including the PD&E study, design, right of way acquisition, and construction.

Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange

The Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange project aims to establish a new I-75 interchange in North Port to improve evacuation routes and support economic growth. First discussed nearly two decades ago, the project gained traction after Hurricane Irma in 2017. A 2022 white paper and stakeholder meetings led to a unified approach among local governments and MPOs, ensuring its inclusion in Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs). FDOT is conducting a feasibility study, and funding for initial phases has been identified. Future steps include securing FDOT approval, updating local plans, and advancing infrastructure development to support the interchange, which is expected to enhance regional connectivity and economic opportunities.

The new interchange would provide a critical emergency evacuation option for the region, which became clearly necessary after Hurricane Irma in 2017. Meanwhile, nearby interchanges, such as Kings Highway and Toledo Blade, are expected to reach capacity in the coming years. A new interchange would help distribute traffic more efficiently. The interchange would also facilitate commercial and industrial growth, creating jobs in the region by improving access to business parks and distribution hubs.

Heavier and Longer Trucks

Federal truck weight limits — 20,000 pounds on a single axle, 34,000 pounds on a tandem axle, and 80,000 pounds overall gross vehicle weight — have been unchanged since 1974. But, in recent years Congress has approved a number of waivers, generally on a state-by-state basis. For example, in 2015 Congress exempted emergency vehicles and certain heavy-duty tow and recovery vehicles from weight limits, waived weight limits on certain highways in Texas and Arkansas, and provided waivers for logging trucks in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Meanwhile, federal truck length regulations apply on the roughly 200,000 miles of road known as the National Network (although due to a requirement for "reasonable access," there is some impact on adjacent roads). Thus, states are generally prohibited from allowing twin 33-foot trailers on the National Network, but there are some exceptions. Outside of this network, states do not have to comply with federal truck size regulations.

Some business interests support bills that would allow heavier and/or longer trucks on American highways. Congress continues to consider proposals that would increase truck size or weight limits, which could pose safety and infrastructure risks for local governments. One bill would increase truck weight limits from 80,000 pounds to 88,000 pounds when carrying automobiles, while the second would authorize additional exemptions for any state to increase truck weights from 80,000 pounds to 91,000 pounds, respectively.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, in its 2016 Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits, specifically looked at 88,000-pound, five axle trucks and found significant safety issues and infrastructure damage associated with this configuration. Ultimately, DOT recommended that Congress not approve heavier trucks. Congress has also rejected recent increases in national truck weight limits because of concerns for public safety and infrastructure damage. In fact, the House of Representatives in 2015 voted on a bipartisan basis to maintain current federal limits.

POSITION: ***Support*** federal funding for the Harborview Road expansion project. **Support** planning efforts to advance the Yorkshire/Raintree Interchange project and other critical road projects in Charlotte County. ***Oppose*** federal increases in truck weight or lengths that may endanger public safety and cause increased infrastructure damage.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Federal Permitting Reform

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Federal permitting reform has gained significant bipartisan momentum in Washington as lawmakers and the administration seek to address longstanding concerns that environmental review processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal statutes create years-long delays for infrastructure, energy, and economic development projects nationwide.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 represented a major legislative achievement in this area, establishing the "One Federal Decision" framework that designates a single lead agency for environmental reviews, limits NEPA processes to two years for major projects and one year for smaller initiatives, and creates page limits for environmental impact statements.

Building on this foundation, Congress has considered additional reform measures including the SPEED Act (Simplifying Environmental and Permitting to Enable Economic Development), which has emerged as a comprehensive reform proposal that would establish statutory deadlines for agency decisions, limit opportunities for litigation that extends project timelines, expand categorical exclusions for routine activities, and create a more efficient process for reviewing energy projects including renewables, transmission lines, and fossil fuel infrastructure. This bill has passed the House, but is currently being debated in the Senate.

The Trump administration has also pursued administrative reforms through executive orders directing agencies to minimize NEPA reviews, update Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and prioritize critical infrastructure projects for expedited processing, though some of these actions have faced legal challenges and may be subject to further modification.

The debate over permitting reform reflects competing priorities between accelerating project delivery and maintaining robust environmental protections, with proponents arguing that modernization can achieve both objectives through smarter processes rather than weakened standards.

POSITION: ***Support*** enactment of the SPEED Act and similar legislative measures that establish firm statutory deadlines for federal agency permitting decisions, streamline coordination among reviewing agencies, and create expedited pathways for infrastructure projects while maintaining science-based environmental review.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Federal Funding for Mitigation and Resilience

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Apart from funding for public assistance generally provided by Congress through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) directly after storms, Congress developed other funding streams to help address long-term mitigation and resilience projects. They include FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Mitigation program (CDBG-MIT). After storms, FEMA had also traditionally provided states with FEMA Hazard Mitigation Block Grant (HMGP) funds, but that program's future remains in doubt due to a lack of new funding by the administration.

Congress last appropriated money for the CDBG-MIT program in 2019 for 2018 disasters. Since then, Congress has generally moved away from a separate, dedicated CDBG-MIT named appropriation, instead requiring mitigation activities to be included within specific CDBG-DR (Disaster Recovery) grants.

Meanwhile, the BRIC program has faced significant turmoil during the second Trump administration, and is in a state of legal limbo after a federal court barred FEMA from terminating it, reversing an April 2025 administration decision to cancel the program and its 2020-2023 grants. While a coalition of states successfully sued to prevent the shutdown, the program's future remains uncertain following its initial, abrupt cancellation. The BRIC program was created during by Congress – and signed into law – during the first Trump Administration.

POSITION: ***Support*** the provision of federal mitigation funding and Charlotte County's efforts to secure such funding.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Veterans Affairs Clinic Relocation

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In early 2025, Bay Pines VA announced plans to relocate the Port Charlotte VA Clinic to North Port, Sarasota County, near the Price and Sumter Boulevard intersection. Despite being marketed as the "new Port Charlotte VA Clinic," this facility will not be located in Port Charlotte or Charlotte County. Once the North Port clinic opens, the existing Port Charlotte facility will close permanently.

Impact on Charlotte County Veterans

Charlotte County is home to approximately 30,000 veterans within a total population of over 220,000 residents. The current Port Charlotte VA clinic serves more than 10,000 veterans annually, providing critical services including primary care and mental health support.

With the closure of the Port Charlotte clinic, veterans will be forced to travel to either North Port in Sarasota County or to Lee County to access VA services. Neither option provides the convenient, accessible care that Charlotte County veterans currently receive locally.

The relocation creates severe accessibility barriers for transportation-disadvantaged veterans:

- Public Transportation Barriers: Charlotte County Transit does not operate across county lines. Veterans who rely on public transit—including older veterans, those with mobility challenges, and those without personal vehicles—will lose access to VA healthcare entirely unless alternative transportation is arranged.
- Regional Congestion: Southwest Florida experiences significant traffic congestion, making cross-county travel increasingly time-consuming and burdensome, particularly for veterans requiring frequent medical appointments.
- Vulnerable Populations: Local veteran service organizations, which assist up to 500 veterans monthly, have expressed serious concerns that many veterans will be left behind by this relocation.

The proposed closure also creates a troubling disparity in healthcare access. Sarasota County will have two VA outpatient clinics (the existing Bee Ridge Road facility and the new North Port location), while Charlotte County will be left with none despite its substantial veteran population

Charlotte County stands ready to work collaboratively with the VA to identify solutions that preserve local access to healthcare for the nearly 30,000 veterans who call Charlotte County home.

POSITION: ***Support*** the expansion of VA services in the region but ***oppose*** closing the Port Charlotte clinic. Charlotte County urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to:

- Maintain a VA clinic within Charlotte County to serve the local veteran population
- Consider the North Port facility as an addition rather than a replacement
- Prioritize accessibility and transportation equity in facility planning decisions

FEDERAL ISSUE: Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Program Urban County Qualification

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and urban counties for a wide range of community development activities, such as affordable housing, infrastructure, economic development, and public services.

To qualify, counties must be within a metropolitan area that has more than 200,000 people, excluding the population of any metropolitan cities in the county. Note that cities with a population of more than 50,000 can qualify as entitlement communities.

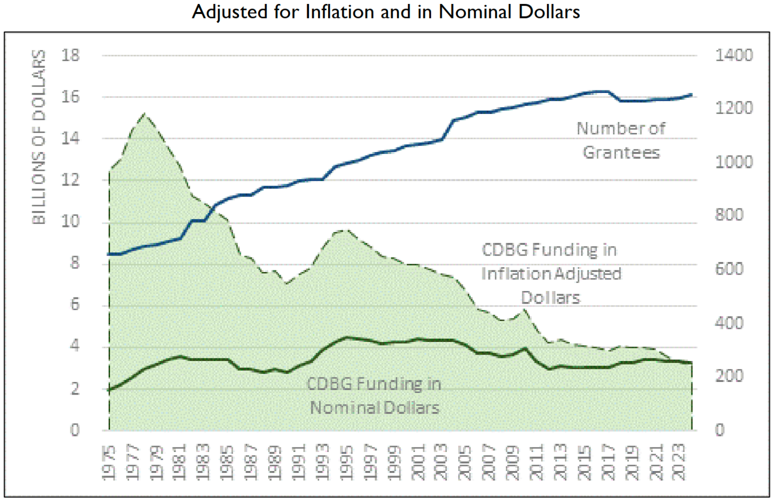
Once qualified, HUD determines the amount of each entitlement grantee's annual funding allocation by a statutory dual formula which uses several objective measures of community needs, including the extent of poverty, population, housing overcrowding, age of housing and population growth lag in relationship to other metropolitan areas.

Every five years, entitlement communities develop a Consolidated Plan that outlines their goals for community development using CDBG funds. The plan also includes an assessment of local needs, a strategy for addressing those needs, and a detailed budget for how the funds will be spent.

CDBG was funded at $3.3 billion in FY 2025. However, that funding level, combined with an increased number of entitlement communities, has significantly reduced the purchasing power of the program over the years.

Figure 1. CDBG Funding and Grantee Count from1975-2024

Adjusted for Inflation and in Nominal Dollars



Based on population growth above the 200,000 person threshold for admittance into the CDBG program, Charlotte County seeks to obtain an Urban County entitlement community qualification for FY 2026, which appears to be on track based on the most recent update from HUD.

POSITION: ***Support*** Charlotte County's application to become an entitlement Community Development Block Grant Program Urban County receipient.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: The Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP) is a federal policy that strips federal health and veterans benefits from individuals upon admission to jail. The Social Security Act (Sec. 1905(a)(A)) prohibits the use of federal funds and services for medical care or other benefits provided to "inmates of a public institution," including those run by counties. The MIEP does not differentiate between a convicted inmate and a person incarcerated prior to conviction and contributes to the national behavioral and mental health crisis as well as rates of recidivism in our local jails.

In the 118th Congress, two bills were introducted that would address the MIEP. The *Due Process Continuity of Care Act* was introduced in the House and Senate. This bill would allow pretrial detainees to receive Medicaid benefits at the option of the state and provide $50 million in planning grant dollars to states and localities for implementing the MIEP repeal, improving the quality of care provided in jails and enhancing the number of available providers to treat this population.

The *Reentry Act* was also reintroduced in the House and Senate. This legislation would allow Medicaid payment for medical services furnished to an eligible incarcerated individual during the 30-day period preceding the individual's release.

Most recently, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a final rule that will improve access to Medicare for justice-involved individuals who are in pre-trial status or who are reentering the community. The CY 2025 Medicare Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System final rule reflects significant updates to Medicare's "custody" definition and Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for formerly incarcerated individuals.

CMS clarified in the final rule that individuals released to the community pending trial, such as those in pretrial supervision or released on cash bail, as well as individuals on parole or probation and residing in halfway houses or home detention are not considered to be in "custody." This important update ensures these individuals can maintain access to Medicare benefits, supporting better health outcomes and smoother transitions back into the community.

Impacts of the final rule

- Narrowing the definition of "custody": CMS finalized its proposal to exclude individuals on bail, parole and probation or in home detention and halfway houses from Medicare's "custody" definition. This critical update ensures Medicare can pay for healthcare services provided to these individuals, who were previously ineligible for the program.

- Revised Special Enrollment Period (SEP) criteria: The rule also updates Medicare SEP eligibility for justice-involved populations and expands eligibility criteria to include individuals released to community supervision or halfway houses. This expansion simplifies access to Medicare, reducing gaps in coverage and ensuring smoother transitions from incarceration to community life.

POSITION: ***Support*** legislation and federal rulemaking efforts to restore pretrial detainee access to federal benefits. ***Support*** congressional action to fully repeal the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy and codify recent CMS administrative reforms.

THORN RUN PARTNERS
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

FEDERAL ISSUE: Opioid Addiction

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: Opioids are a class of drugs made from opium, as well as synthetic or semi-synthetic drugs that resemble these opium-based drugs. Many opioids are available by prescription, including oxycodone, codeine, morphine, and fentanyl. Meanwhile, heroin is an illegal opioid.

Approximately 80,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in 2023. Opioids — mainly synthetic opioids (other than methadone) – are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths, particularly fentanyl.

Fentanyl has emerged as the leading opioid in drug overdose deaths and has been found laced in other common drugs to boost their potency. Because of this practice, fentanyl is extremely difficult to detect and it has led to an increase in accidental overdoses. In 2025, more than 47 million fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills and nearly 10,000 pounds of fentanyl powder was seized.

The State Opioid Response (SOR) grant program was initially established in 2018 under the 21st Century Cures Act to help states and territories address the opioid crisis. It provides funding for a range of state-level initiatives aimed at reducing opioid use, expanding treatment options, supporting recovery services, and preventing overdose deaths. The program was reauthorized and expanded under the American Rescue Plan in 2021, and it has continued to receive attention as part of broader efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.

In 2025, Congress again reauthorized the SUPPORT Act, continuing funding for substance use disorder and overdose prevention services through fiscal year 2030.

The 2025 SUPPORT Act Reauthorization renews and strengthens important programs that had originally been authorized in the 2018 SUPPORT Act but expired in September 2023. Key provisions include reauthorization of comprehensive opioid recovery centers that provide a full spectrum of support services for individuals with substance use disorder, programs to help more addiction medicine providers enter the workforce, and protections for the 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Lifeline from cybersecurity threats.

Congress allocated $1.5 billion for the SOR program in 2025. From that program, Florida most recently received $123 million over two fiscal years, which have been managed by the Florida Department of Children and Families. SOR is a popular program because it can be used for the full continuum of services for substance use disorders.

POSITION: ***Support*** federal funding to address local opioid addiction and treatment issues. ***Support*** attempts by entities within Charlotte County to secure funding to fight opioid addiction.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Older Americans Act

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: The Older Americans Act (OAA), originally enacted in 1965 and most recently reauthorized through the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, represents the primary federal vehicle for organizing and delivering community-based services to older adults across the United States. The Act establishes a comprehensive framework administered by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) within the Department of Health and Human Services, providing formula grants to state units on aging and local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) – including the AAA for Southwest Florida, which serves Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, and Lee, and Sarasota counties – to deliver essential services including:

- nutrition programs (congregate and home-delivered meals)
- transportation assistance
- caregiver support
- health promotion
- elder abuse prevention
- legal services.

The 2020 reauthorization, which extended the Act through fiscal year 2024, strengthened provisions related to family caregiver support, expanded support for grandparents raising grandchildren, enhanced nutrition programs to address food insecurity and malnutrition among seniors, and increased focus on fall prevention and chronic disease management. Congress authorized funding levels reaching $2.5 billion annually for OAA programs, though actual appropriations have historically fallen short of these authorization levels and require annual decisions through the congressional appropriations process.

As the current authorization expired at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, Congress must reauthorize the OAA, with stakeholders advocating for increased funding levels that reflect demographic realities as the nation's 65-and-older population continues to grow rapidly and live longer with more complex health needs.

Absent a new authorization, appropriations discussions have centered on maintaining or increasing funding for core OAA programs. The reauthorization debate has focused on several key priorities including modernizing nutrition programs to address dietary needs and social isolation, expanding caregiver support programs as more families provide long-term care at home, strengthening elder justice protections against financial exploitation and abuse, improving coordination between aging services and healthcare systems to support aging in place, and ensuring adequate funding for AAAs to meet growing demand from their communities.

Bipartisan support for the OAA remains strong given the program's critical role in helping older adults maintain independence and quality of life, though debates continue over funding levels, program priorities, and the balance between supporting existing services and expanding to address emerging needs. For communities with significant older adult populations, such as retirement-destination areas in Florida, OAA funding through state and local aging networks provides essential infrastructure for meal programs, senior centers, transportation services, and caregiver respite that would otherwise fall to local governments or go unmet entirely.

POSITION: ***Support*** robust reauthorization of the Older Americans Act with significantly increased funding levels that reflect the growing senior population and rising costs of delivering essential services, particularly for nutrition programs, transportation assistance, and caregiver support initiatives that help older adults age in place with dignity.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Affordable Housing

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is considered to be the most important resource for creating affordable housing in the United States today. Created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program gives State and local LIHTC-allocating agencies the equivalent of approximately $8 billion in annual budget authority to issue tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. An average of almost 1,400 projects and 106,400 units were placed in service annually between 1995 to 2018. In Florida, the LIHTC-administering agency is the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

Virtually no affordable housing is produced without using the LIHTC. Affordable housing developers rely on the credit for a variety of projects, including the production of new units and the preservation of public housing units. However, the limited availability and the popularity of the housing tax credit have made it very competitive in many states.

Most recently, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) of 2025 permanently expanded the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program in two significant ways. First, the legislation permanently increased each state's allocation of 9% LIHTC by 12%, beginning in 2026. This represents the largest expansion of the Housing Credit since 2000. Second, the OBBBA permanently reduced the private activity bond financing requirement for 4% LIHTC projects from 50% to 25% of aggregate basis, effective January 1, 2026. This reduction removes a major bottleneck that historically constrained project volume in states that routinely hit their private activity bond cap, allowing states to support more projects with 4% credits while maintaining current bond issuance levels. Together, these changes could help finance approximately 1.22 million new affordable homes nationwide over the next decade.

POSITION: ***Support*** legislation to expand and improve the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

FEDERAL ISSUE: Assessment of Fair Housing Rule

BACKGROUND; HOW IT MAY AFFECT CHARLOTTE COUNTY: In 2015, the Obama Administration published a final rule entitled Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). The rule was seen as overly prescriptive and burdensome by some stakeholders and did not assist with the overall inadequate supply of affordable housing, instead diverting time and effort to data collection and compliance. Additionally, there were concerns that the rule could make local governments and housing authorities more vulnerable to third-party lawsuits. The rule required stakeholders to use an Assessment Tool, created by HUD, to conduct and submit an Assessment of Fair Housing to HUD, but these tools proved difficult to develop.

During the development of the first round of Assessments of Fair Housing, HUD found the tool to be labor-intensive for both HUD and local governments and to produce incomplete or inaccurate reports. The overall rule was to be implemented in two phases, with the first phase impacting communities that receive at least $500,000 in CDBG funding and the second phase, following five years later, for those communities receiving less than $500,000 in CDBG funds a year.

The first Trump Administration cancelled the Obama-era rule. The Biden Administration followed by cancelling the Trump proposed rule and reinstating the Obama-era rule.

Most recently, in 2025, the Trump Administration via HUD published a withdrawal of the AFFH rule from February 2023. The 2023 proposed rule incorporated much of the framework of a 2015 AFFH rule and would have required program participants to submit an equity plan to HUD every five years. Currently, HUD does not intend for a final rule to be issued; if there are further regulations on the topic, HUD will issue a new notice of proposed rulemaking.

POSITION: ***Monitor*** implementation of HUD's Assessment of Fair Housing Rule.