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### • Health Care Access for the Uninsured - \$100,000

At this time, no funding was received in FY07 and those three projects remain on the county's FY08 Federal Legislative Agenda. The Ferguson Group offers the following explanation for what transpired in FY07: The loss of all funding for earmarked projects was a nationwide event and very disappointing for every local government that had a pending earmark and was counting on that funding coming to their projects. Collier County had three (3) projects totaling \$850,000, which were affected by this nationwide event. FY07 funding, however, has not disappeared. Instead of being parceled out for earmarks, it is going in lump sums to the agencies. That funding will then go toward projects through the federal agencies. The Ferguson Group (TFG) is prepared to work on securing some of this funding for your FY07 projects. Once the year-long Continuing Resolution is signed by the President, the Ferguson Group will begin this FY07 work with the federal agencies.

As soon as the Board approved the FY08 Federal Agenda on Feb.

13, 2007, The Ferguson Group began filling out all the required congressional questionnaires for each project, as well as necessary correspondence from Collier County to Congress, in preparation for the Collier County/City of Naples contingent to travel to Washington for the advocacy meetings on Capitol Hill in support of the projects.

According to The Ferguson Group, leaders in the new 110th Congress have vowed to proceed as usual with the FY08 appropriations process, and have specifically declared their intent to include earmarks in the individual spending bills. There are proposed changes to the process, but those changes can only benefit local government entities. The new Congress wants transparency in the appropriations process, meaning that the member of Congress who requests and secures funding for a project in an individual bill will be named as the project's sponsor.

As Collier County Manager, I absolutely feel this was a very worthwhile trip and I am confident Collier County put its best argument forward to help justify federal dollars for these worthwhile projects for our community. These annual trips of the last few years have continued to develop and cultivate healthy rela-

tionships with the members of our Congressional Delegation which is refreshing and reinforces strong alliances at the federal level.

In addition, the elected officials and their staff were very impressed with our realistic requests and the fact that we had culled down our list and prioritized our requests and done our homework. I believe they will do what they can for us. And they know if they need additional information, all they have to do is pick up the phone.

Some good news received recently that is attributed to our past lobbying trips to Washington is that the federal Water Resources Development Act of 2007 includes two Collier County projects: Collier County Beaches - Sec. 4025 reads that "The Secretary (of the Army) shall conduct a study to determine the feasibility of carrying out a project for hurricane and storm damage reduction and flood damage reduction in the vicinity of Vanderbilt, Park Shore, and Naples beaches, Collier County, Florida."

And Vanderbilt Beach Lagoon - Sec. 4027 reads that "The Secretary shall conduct a study to determine the feasibility of carrying out a pro-



Left to right: Naples City Councilman Gary Price, Commissioner Frank Halas, County Manager Jim Mudd, Commissioner Jim Coletta, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart

ject for environmental restoration, water supply, and improvement of water quality at Vanderbilt Beach Lagoon, Florida."

Two years ago, Commissioner Halas and I traveled to Washington to request additional funding for the expansion of and improvements to Interstate 75. Federal additional commitments of \$80 to 90 million resulted that year.

The point I think that needs to be made is that being at the table makes a difference. Being part of the dialogue is important. Collier County is noticed, known and respected in Washington, D.C. by its Congressional Delegation. Collier County citizens can be proud of that.

*Until next month, be safe.*