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The Florida Legislature and the Tallahassee Blues

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Legislative Report

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The Florida Legislature is in session during March and April in Tallahassee and because of that, we are looking at various bills for any threat to our going nude at Haulover Beach and other naturist beach sites in Florida.

South Florida Free Beaches/Florida Naturist Association maintains a paid legislative lobbyist in Tallahassee to represent our and your naturist interests.

Although there is no bill that is a direct frontal attack on mere nudity as there has been in previous years, there are always a few bills that if amended could represent a problem or affect our favorite beach.

As always, the first biggest threat to Haulover Beach's nudity as well as attempts to obtain future designated naturist beaches in Florida is the number of first and second year legislators that have not been educated on the issues concerning public nudity law and the success of Haulover's naturist beach. Presently there are over 65 legislators in this classification. These are the ones that are easily convinced to sponsor bills that would have a negative effect on Haulover's naturist beach.

The second biggest threat to Haulover Beach would be to do nothing and assume that the clothing-optional beach will be there forever. Many beach visitors hold that wrongful thought. They tried that in California and it did not work out. The director of California State Parks issued an order recently to ban nudity at all California State Beach Parks. There were few naturist groups to defend their beaches.

We are currently planning to send a representative a trip to Tallahassee to spend a week to focus on educating as many legislators as possible on the success of Haulover Beach and the benefits of naturist beaches for Florida, for both its citizens and to attract tourists. We have a government affairs packet that we produce each year for this purpose.

To those who say there is no threat to the closure of Haulover Beach please be aware of the following.

- Haulover is a defacto designated naturist beach. It can be closed by state law.. To reopen the naturist beach, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners would have to pass special legislation designating the beach section as naturist for nude use.. That type of legislation has never been enacted in the United States, by any elected governing body that we are aware of.
 - The argument that the county would not want to give up the parking revenues does not hold water. Miami-Dade County is a \$7.6 billion dollar operation. Larger than 16 state budgets. The net proceeds are miniscule. The county gives more than that away to the just Sony-Ericsson Event in a few days.
 - Further, if such legislation passed at the state level and we were able to get an official designation in Miami-Dade County for Haulover Beach, mere nudity would be banned through out the state, foreclosing any chance to add additional naturists beaches within the state of Florida. This would be unacceptable to our association.
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The cost of maintaining a lobbyist in Tallahassee as well as the cost of a year around government affairs program is an expensive undertaking that we have determined from experience to be essential to the continuation of a clothing-optional beach at Haulover Beach and the hope of obtaining additional sites around the state.

Beach Renourishment of Florida Beaches

On the front burner during this session is the governor's budget. This budget eliminates state funds for beach renourishment programs. This is not good news. The county's plans to renourish beaches from Haulover Beach to South Beach will be effected.

Florida currently has 181 miles of beach that need to be renourished. If Florida's beaches do not get renourished on a regular basis, there won't be any beaches to go to and beachfront property will become threatened by hurricanes and storms.

This will effect home insurance rates for all homeowners because oceanfront properties are in the same insurance pool. As the beach erode's and the ocean moves closer to isurance rates will sky-rocket and storm damage will later increase rate even higher.

We will be joining efforts of other groups such as the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association to support Florida Senate and House members efforts to restore state dollars to the budget for beach renourishment.

Watch for a special email on this issue.

Miami-Dade County Government Affairs Issues

We have been so focused on naturist issues around the state of Florida and in assisting other naturist groups at various locations around the United States that we have neglected our home county when it comes to government affairs.

Due to the recent recall of the county mayor and one county commissioner, there will be a special election held within the next 45 days for their replacements. We will be called upon for donations and we must contribute and participate in the upcoming elections. There is expected to be political turmoil in Miami-Dade County government over the next few years.

There are new commissioners and existing commissioners, a total of 13 and the mayor candidates that must be brought up to date on the importance of Haulover Beach to Miami-Dade County through its economic impact..

Most non-profit groups have a local lobbyist. We do not. Our lobbying has been done by volunteers and that may not be a sustainable option in the future.

There are several issues that need to be addressed at Haulover Beach Park. From handicap access, to additional bile racks. Quicker plumbing repairs to the restrooms. Many issues that were promised in the the Bond Issue of 10 years ago have never been completed. We have learned that most issues are political.

The City of Sunny Isles Beach

We also have issues on a "Watch List" with the city of Sunny Isles Beach, the city to the north of Haulover Beach Park. Last year three candidates ran for public office on the platform of taking over Haulover Beach Park for the purpose of developing it so the city could increase park space, build cultural buildings as amenities and to increase their tax base by commercializing the land area. Completed architectural drawings were displayed in campaign literature.

Cities do not have to abide by Miami-Dade County's Charter item Article 6, to non-commercialize public parks.

Who was behind this thrust and who paid for the drawing we do not know at this time. Developers have run out of oceanfront land to develop and you can bet they are salivating of the potential of Haulover Beach Park.

Members of South Florida Free Beaches did set up a meeting with the candidates last fall and we were able to present our opposition to any plans for a take-over or development of Haulover Park. One of those candidates did win and at this time there has been no further talk of expanding into Haulover Beach Park.

We do have members living in the city Sunny Isles Beach that are meeting with elected officials and presenting our position and goals to them. We have had a good reception to date.

Request for your help.

We ask that you take these facts into consideration and make a donation to our Legal Defense/Political Action Fund for legislative education and to help us pay for our lobbyist and our legislative expenses..

You can send checks to: SFFB/FNA PO Box 530306, Miami Shores Florida 33153

In remarks write LDPA Fund.

You can also donate online at www.sffb.com/sponsors

We want to thank our supporters for their past and continuous support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Mason". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Richard Mason

President

South Florida Free Beaches/

Florida Naturist Association