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SOUTH FLORIDA 100

OPINION

South Florida 100: Brown Jackson hearings, skyrocketing rent, governor signing bills

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Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson testifies on the third day of her Senate nomination hearings to be an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. ((Yuri Gripas/Abaca Press/TNS))



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Anthony J. Abbate, architect

Last week: Congratulations, Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale, for 100 years of service to the community! The club's first president, John Dewey Sherwin, newspaper editor and publisher of the Fort Lauderdale Herald, was active in the establishment of Broward County. Rotarians played leading roles in the construction of Sunrise Boulevard, the Intracoastal Waterway, Port Everglades,

War Memorial Auditorium and Kinney Tunnel. They also served as the first city attorney, first city manager, first superintendent of public schools and three mayors. To date the club has awarded over 3 million in scholarships to local high school graduates who struggle to afford a college education.

Looking ahead: Public-private-partnerships (P3s) are intended to deliver public services by outsourcing to the private sector. The state law is intended to be “liberally construed” to provide more opportunities, but this implies more scrutiny to protect the public interests. City leaders in Fort Lauderdale eagerly embrace the concept, approving an unsolicited proposal to turn over public land to a private entertainment venue despite overwhelming support for additional parkland downtown. Let’s hope they sharpen their pencils (and their minds) before completing negotiations on another P3 with more serious implications: the city’s water treatment facilities. Experts have cautioned against it.



Lori Berman, member, Florida Senate

Last week: Promoting healthy eating and living is a hallmark of our public schools. In accordance with USDA’s National School Lunch and School Breakfast regulations, our schools offer many programs, ranging from nutrition planning, gardens with fresh fruits and vegetables, health fairs and beyond. Just this week, Guy Fieri visited Lake Worth High School and donated \$20,000 to its culinary program. This curriculum is one of 11 of its kind in the PBC School District, training students in areas such as food prep and service and fostering a love of cooking. Thank you for the generous donation and welcome to our community, Guy!

Looking ahead: On April 4, the Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson’s nomination to the Supreme Court. Judge Jackson has done well in defending her judicial record and character against a litany of Republican attacks. The committee’s even Democrat to Republican split could mean a deadlocked vote, but Democrats can move her nomination forward with a simple majority vote on the floor. Judge Jackson is beyond qualified and enjoys a record 58% of initial public support. It is past time a Black woman be confirmed to the highest Court.



Kathleen Cannon, president, United Way of Broward County

Last week: Major kudos and a huge thank you to the Broward County transit bus driver who saved many lives

after a gunman fired 21 bullets aboard her bus. She drove the bus full of passengers to safety at the Fort Lauderdale Police Department – even driving against traffic on Broward Boulevard to get there. While two people tragically died and two others were injured in the shooting, the bus driver is a true example of grace under pressure, and I commend her for her bravery and quick thinking. She is a hero.

Looking ahead: While many people hope for a totally drug-free society, the fact is, this is not a reality. Therefore, in order to prevent deaths and injury to current and potential users, it is imperative that we offer methods to reduce the potential harm of illicit drugs. This includes making paper testing strips available for people to detect the presence of dangerous substances like fentanyl. Studies have shown the efficacy of these strips and making them legal is the humane thing to do.



Mike Caruso, member, Florida House of Representatives

Last week: Monday morning at a press conference at Renaissance Charter School in Wellington, I stood with

Gov. Ron DeSantis as he spoke regarding the benefits of HB 641-Funds for the Operation of Schools. This bill, which takes effect on July 1, will allocate an additional \$800 million for teacher salaries and will set the minimum base salary for Florida teachers at \$47,500. I am proud of a lot of what my fellow legislators and I accomplished this past legislative session. HB 641 is as important as any bill that the governor will sign into law this year. Investing in hardworking teachers is one of the most effective ways we can improve the quality of our public education system to prepare our children for their future.



Angelo Castillo, commissioner, Pembroke Pines

Last week: There can be little hope of price competition for any good or service without many competitors. That's

the problem we face in Florida with homeowner's insurance. To keep our homes affordably insured -- in sharp contrast to the skyrocketing premiums we're forced to pay today to protect our homes -- many more companies need to get into the game competing to do the job. The easiest way to ensure this happens is to not charter any insurance company to sell auto insurance in our state unless they also agree to sell homeowner protection. This one action alone goes far to fixing the problem. It is just drenching in good public policy, yet Tallahassee refuses to do it. So, we pay more.



Mitch Ceasar, former chairman, Broward County Democratic Party

Last week: We as a nation are about to reach a historic crossroad, with the appointment of Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S Supreme Court. Her path included growing up in Miami and serving as a federal judge at the District and Appellate level. Her qualifications are superior. The questioning by some Republicans was only about personal media attention. The history centers on the fact that she will be the first Black female Supreme Court justice. She will be confirmed, and it is long overdue.



Jamie Cole, municipal attorney, various Broward County cities

Last week: This week, the Florida Supreme Court set oral argument in a lawsuit brought by 33 local governments and 70 local officials challenging a statute that deters them from enacting local firearm regulations for fear that they could be removed from office, be personally fined and expose their local government to damage claims. The local officials prevailed at the trial court on all three penalties, but an appellate court reversed as to the latter two. Now the Supreme Court will decide whether basic tenets of democracy – legislative and governmental function immunity – continue to exist at the local level in Florida.

Dan Daley, member, Florida House of Representatives



Last week: This past legislative session, the Legislature took time to pass controversial bills, such as the "Don't Say Gay" bill and the 15-week abortion ban. However, nothing was passed related to the Florida housing and rental

market and, most importantly, property insurance reform. I believe the Legislature should hold a special session to tackle the property insurance and affordable housing crisis within this state. These are some of the kitchen table issues that families care about, whether or not they can afford their homes or purchase a new one. These are the day-to-day issues that we as a legislative body should be tackling.



Michael De Lucca, president, Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc.

Last week: On average over the past 30 years, Washington D.C.'s famed cherry blossoms have peaked on

March 31. This year's peak is ten days ahead of the March 31 average due to warmer weather since mid-February. Peak bloom means 70% of the cherry trees' buds are flowering. The earliest peak bloom happened on March 15, 1990 and the latest occurred on April 18, 1958. This year's March 21 peak bloom date is the eighth-earliest peak bloom on record. The blossoms can remain at peak bloom up to one week under favorable weather conditions – light wind and no rain.

Looking ahead: Daylight saving time has been in place in nearly all of the U.S. since the 1960s. The U.S. Senate passed legislation that would make daylight saving time permanent beginning in 2023. The Senate approved the measure, named the Sunshine Protection Act, unanimously by voice vote. The House of Representatives must still pass the bill before it can go to the president. This bill would end the twice-annual changing of clocks in an effort to advocate for brighter afternoons, more economic activity, reduce seasonal depression and encourage children to play outdoors later. Once passed, this will not occur until November 2023.

Dr. Michael Dennis, chair, FAU Schmidt College of Medicine



Last week: Readers have become accustomed to laudatory articles about Prince William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. But this week, their visit to Jamaica was rejected by government leadership amid demands for a sincere apology for slavery and provisions for reparations. Jamaica is proud to celebrate 60 years of independence, but not the 70 years of their grandmother on the throne was the message. One letter signed by hundreds of Jamaican leaders noted that Queen Elizabeth and her predecessors “perpetuated the greatest human rights tragedy in the history of humankind.”

Looking ahead: If ever there was a time when it was critical to accurately collect and share public health data it is now – as the COVID pandemic continues to plague the globe. When the impact of the virus became quite evident, I recall trying to find out basic information like how many people had been hospitalized, and how many intensive care beds and ventilators were available. The answer was: We don’t know. Apparently, health care educators/providers didn’t have authority to compel hospitals to report, and they didn’t. Congress must give the CDC authority to coordinate data collection and create benefit for everyone.



Howard Dvorkin, CPA, chairman, Debt.com

Looking ahead: As a CPA, financial author and counselor, I’ve seen the damage inflation inflicts. I see its silver lining, too. When the economy was roaring, people spent money without paying attention. Now they’re worried about saving a few cents on a gallon of gas. This focus on finances is a good and necessary thing. It just needs to last long after the current crisis. We didn’t learn this lesson after the Great Recession, when we ramped up our personal debt. We didn’t learn it after the pandemic, when we started doing the same thing. We should learn it now.



Lamar Fisher, vice mayor, Broward County

Last week: Recently, we celebrated National 311 Day to show our appreciation for 311 call takers. Broward County’s

311 Call Center provides a single point of contact for the services and programs offered by more than 60 agencies in Broward County government. Call takers were of major assistance during the pandemic and continue to answer any question you may have about county services. In 2021, the 311 Call Center answered more than 320,000 calls!

Looking ahead: Next week, I'm excited to welcome approximately 800 travel agents at the Broward County Convention Center for the 2022 Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Cruise360 official conference. CLIA is the world's largest cruise industry trade association, providing a unified voice and leading authority of the global cruise community. As we've seen, cruising is back in full force, and I'm happy to welcome this major conference, which will provide an economic boost to the businesses in our community.



**Dan Flynn, vice president for research,
Florida Atlantic University**

Last week: Genealogy is a popular hobby for many Americans. A study out of the University of Oxford shows humanity's family tree going back 100,000 years! It compared the entire genome of over 3,600 people from 215 populations, including DNA isolated from ancient human bone fragments. The study, shown as a short video at [Youtu.be/CwjoDRUrKXw](https://youtu.be/CwjoDRUrKXw), demonstrates how people migrated across the globe and how we are all related through common genetic sequences. It indicates that we all originated from common ancestors who were from what is now the country of Sudan. To quote Sister Sledge, "We are Family."



**Beam Furr, member, Broward County
Commission**

Last week: The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released their annual report this month. The report revealed a startling fact – since 2016, more carbon has been added to the atmosphere than was added from the beginning of all humanity until 1945. This exponential growth is leading us towards a temperature rise of over 1.5 degrees, which is dangerous for the future of human life on our planet. It is beyond

clear that we cannot sit idly by and allow this unsustainable growth in emissions to continue. Our entire future depends on making collective, global investments in electric vehicles, public transit and other actions to reduce our footprint.



Anna Fusco, president, Broward Teachers Union

Looking ahead: Teachers spend many unpaid hours in evenings, on weekends, during breaks and summer vacation planning lessons, grading papers and researching ways to improve learning because they're committed to their students. Teachers spend their own money on supplies and more to improve learning because they're committed to their students. Teachers take time to listen to students' problems and help them find solutions because they're committed to their students. It's time our elected leaders show the same commitment to teachers by paying them what they're worth, letting them direct the learning, and not limiting what they say to their students.



Dan Gropper, dean, College of Business, Florida Atlantic University

Last week: The price of gasoline and diesel fuel continue reaching new highs, raising production costs and pushing consumer and producer prices higher across the U.S. economy. Why? Basic supply and demand. On the campaign trail, candidate Joe Biden promised to "end fossil fuels." As president, he has done a lot to keep this promise. Biden signed executive orders to reverse Trump-era policies that promoted U.S. oil production and helped the U.S. become energy independent. Biden also put in place regulators who are raising U.S. fossil fuel production and usage costs. Higher gas prices are a feature, not a bug, of Biden's policies.

Looking ahead: Competing views on fossil fuel production, energy policy and international security will be critical. As people see starkly the effects of restricting U.S. energy production on cash flows to other nations, and the resulting shifts in international power and ability and willingness to wage war, the discussion may change. I certainly hope so. By unleashing our capacity in production and

distribution, the U.S. can again become energy independent, with economic and political benefits at home and around the world.



Marlon A. Hill, of counsel, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman, P.L.

Last week: Class is in session for America. U.S. Supreme Court nominee and homegrown Miami girl, Judge Ketanji

Brown Jackson, revealed the core of her family values, educational journey and judicial dexterity in contrast to a series of passive-aggressive questions seeking to undermine or project unseen qualities in her character. With a consistent and even-keeled temperament, Judge Brown Jackson demonstrated a grounded understanding of the Constitution and its limitations. We could all share in how our local public schools nurtured such an extraordinary talent. I hope teaching this historic moment does not fall into one of feeling shame in later years.

Looking ahead: Miami Beach has a real dilemma on its hand. The dependency on a hospitality economy demands a deeper dive into greater engagement with the communities who are magnetized by the city's brand and cache. And of course, the focus of the headlines are on primarily Black and brown college students and millennials looking for their next Instagram moment. It would be interesting to look more closely at the city and its industry partners' budgets for strategic communications with this demographic segment of visitors. Here's the prediction: They will not stop coming. In fact, the numbers will rise.



Jason Hughes, executive director, ArtServe

Last week: Just a month before Earth Day, as the Clean Water Act reaches its 50th anniversary this year, Florida was ranked by the Environmental Integrity Project as having the most polluted lakes in America. Florida also ranked second for the most polluted estuaries. The report was based on Florida's 2020 Water Quality Report filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The findings mean Florida has the highest total acres of lakes too polluted for swimming or supporting healthy aquatic life, given

inadequate oxygen levels and high levels of fecal matter that can sicken people and kill fish and other marine creatures.

Looking ahead: Taking concrete action to stop climate change and deforestation, curb fast fashion and plastic pollution, and protect endangered species are all ways we can #InvestInOurPlanet, which is the theme for this year's Earth Day on April 22 — the largest civic observance in the world. ArtServe and others across Broward County are planning events now to focus on accelerating solutions and activating everyone from government, businesses and individuals to do their part in our collective responsibility to reframe the conversation. EarthDay.org provides excellent resources, toolkits and ideas on how to participate. Change is within our reach if we work together!



Marty Kiar, property appraiser, Broward County

Last week: The Florida Legislature passed legislation that will impact residential property owners. State Rep. Michael Gottlieb, D-Davie, secured language in the legislative tax package increasing the exemption value for widows, widowers, blind persons and persons who are totally and permanently disabled. State Rep. Marie Woodson, D-Hollywood, and state Sen. Tina Polksky, D-Boca Raton, were instrumental in the passage of a new law that provides tax relief to property owners whose residences are destroyed by a catastrophic event. Additionally, a proposed constitutional amendment to be voted on by Floridians in November would provide an additional homestead exemption to classroom teachers, law enforcement, firefighters, active military members and others.



Chip LaMarca, member, Florida House of Representatives

Last week: The 2022 legislative session has officially come to a close! This year 3,735 bills were filed, 4,324 votes were taken, and 285 bills passed both chambers. We passed a historic \$112.1 billion budget, including \$8.9 billion in reserves. This year's budget builds on last year's priority to prepare Florida for a better tomorrow, with \$1 billion to offset

inflation on the state, \$2.3 billion for Everglades restoration, \$50 million for beach restoration, \$362.7 million for affordable housing, \$82.2 million for historic, cultural/museum grants, and \$800 million for teacher/personnel salary raises. The Legislature has sent the budget to Gov. Ron DeSantis for his signature.

Looking ahead: Gov. Ron DeSantis was joined by Speaker Chris Sprowls and Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran to sign Senate Bill 1048 into law. This legislation officially replaces the Florida Standards Assessment with progress monitoring to measure students' growth. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, students will participate in short check-ins instead of multiday, end-of-year, high-stakes tests for English language arts and mathematics. Progress monitoring will benefit students, teachers and parents by allowing for informed instruction in a timely manner, helping instruction to be tailored to each student's individual needs. I will continue to support our teachers and our students.



Ina Lee, owner, Travelhost Elite of Greater Fort Lauderdale

Last week: The impact on tourism is just beginning because of our governor and state Legislature's backward laws that will impact diversity, equity and inclusion. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), the largest organization representing trade and professional associations, condemned the "Stop Woke Act." Their press release says that the new laws are repressive and send a clear signal that the state is not interested in the real barriers people in the workforce deal with. Given that the meetings and convention business has not recovered from the pandemic, this censure by a very influential organization needs to be taken seriously.

Looking ahead: As we head into April, we have major events to look forward to that will accelerate our tourism growth. Tortuga, the Air Show and Formula One will attract not only residents but thousands of visitors from around the country. All good news for tourism, our No. 1 economic driver.

Charlotte Mather-Taylor, executive director, Area Agency on Aging of Broward County



Looking ahead: Many people working at home during the pandemic have been able to simultaneously care for a declining loved one. As businesses are starting to require employees to return to working in the office, the issues of caregiving are likely to accelerate. The Area Agency on Aging network of day care and senior centers can help. Day care and senior centers connect older adults to vital community services that can help them stay engaged and healthy and afford them the opportunity to socialize with others. For a listing of Area Agency on Aging day care and senior centers, visit adrcbroward.org/senior-centers or call the Broward Helpline at 954-745-9779.



Jennifer O'Flannery Anderson, president and CEO, Community Foundation of Broward

Last week: The worldwide outpouring of support for the people of Ukraine is so moving. We see it here in South Florida with donors stepping up to support trusted aid organizations that are helping people whose lives have been turned upside down by the Russian invasion. Recently, Palm Beach County philanthropist Lois Pope made an inspiring \$1 million donation to Save the Children, an organization working to help children and families fleeing escalating violence in Ukraine. Many others are giving what they can to do their part to help during this crisis. The power of philanthropy never ceases to amaze me.

Looking ahead: We have all seen home prices skyrocket over the past year – good news for the investments of current homeowners, bad news for would-be buyers getting priced out of our community. Rents are also going through the roof, forcing people to spend more than they can afford to stay or to move out, with few affordable alternatives. The Sun Sentinel recently reported that typical rents now are just under \$3,000 a month. That's too much for most young adults, families struggling paycheck to paycheck or fixed-income seniors. South Florida's worsening housing affordability problem is something our community can't afford to ignore.

Frank Ortis, mayor, Pembroke Pines



Last week: I am still trying to get used to the Daylight Saving Time (DST) change we all experienced recently. After the Senate just passed the Sunshine Protection Act, which would end the practice of changing our clocks twice

a year and make Daylight Saving Time permanent, it now goes to the House. This time-change debate has gone on for years. It's time (no pun intended) to stay on one time all year. Arizona and Hawaii already do it. Lots of other countries also keep to one time. We need to lock the clocks, choose a time and stick with it.

Looking ahead: A bill that unanimously passed this legislative session requiring high school students in the 2023-2024 school year to take a financial literacy course to graduate has been signed by the governor. It's important that our youth learn about bank accounts, money, debit and credit card management, loan applications, taxes and so much more to help them navigate financial challenges as they enter college and beyond. This is a required half-credit course that can only benefit their lives in the real world. Florida is now the seventh state to mandate a stand-alone course in personal financial literacy to graduate.



Tina Polksky, member, Florida Senate

Last week: This past week, the Senate and the country saw Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's deep commitment to the rule of law and learned just how qualified she is for the Supreme Court. We all saw the breadth and depth of her legal career — and her record of evenhandedness, impartiality and independence. As a lawyer, I am truly in awe of her accomplishments. I am also so proud that we will finally have a Black woman on the Court, one who has even more experience than other justices. She will bring an important perspective to the Court and be an incredible role model for all Americans.



Larry Rein, CEO and President, ChildNet

Last week: Are we setting the bar far too low when it comes to the behavior we expect and accept from the young adults who visit South Florida during spring break? Initial media reports of calm in Miami are soon followed by news of shootings, weapons

confiscations and law enforcement claiming it is overworked, overwhelmed and wanting to “end the party.” The festivities in Fort Lauderdale are described as “not as wild and crazy,” but that shockingly ignores six West Point cadets overdosing on cocaine laced with fentanyl. Things seems neither serene nor sane. They do seem very dangerous and unacceptable.



Nan Rich, member, Broward County Commission

Last week: The Senate Supreme Court hearings for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson have been a tale of two confirmations. One is a portrait of an African-American woman with a brilliant legal mind; poised, dignified, grateful for all those who loved and guided her. The other is a shameful performance of hostile senators to distort and destroy the reputation of this ultra-qualified woman. Interrupting Judge Jackson repeatedly, they were a pack of outright bullies, exactly what we teach our children not to be! Like Sen. Cory Booker, who gave a stirring speech to Jackson, I will rejoice when this supremely qualified woman is confirmed!



Nora Rupert, member, Broward School Board

Last week: Congressman Ted Deutch has served District 22 with compassion and principle, and I am incredibly proud to call him my congressman. In this last session of his term, Congressman Deutch fought very hard to guarantee that our peer-to-peer mentoring programs in Broward County schools, will receive \$500,000 in the omnibus spending bill. These programs can make the difference with our at-risk students, seeing that they have a path to success, just like their mentors do. Seeing people who look like you, being successful, is incredibly powerful. Big Brothers and Big Sisters, 5000 Role Models and Mentoring Tomorrow’s Leaders are so important.

Maria Sachs, member, Palm Beach County Commission



Last week: The first order of government, whether city, county, state or federal, is the safety of its people. We depend on ordinances, statutes and local permitting rules to ensure the safety of buildings in which we live, work and

play. With the current lack of affordable housing, many landlords are taking advantage of substandard housing to lure working families, many with young children, to find an affordable place to live. The county did the right thing by shutting down and demolishing a dangerous apartment building by court order this last week. I've asked staff to provide the county commission with statistics of how many buildings do not meet the minimum living standards.

Looking ahead: The price of living in paradise is that more and more people want to enjoy it. Thousands of out of state residents are moving into Florida, and many make it down to our section of paradise. It is no surprise to anyone that home sales have skyrocketed in the last two years. More disconcerting is the incredible rise in rents in our area. According to reports, rents have risen to a staggering 37% last year and in some areas up to 40%. We have to provide more available and affordable housing if we wish to continue our share of paradise.



Laurie Sallarulo, CEO, Junior Achievement of South Florida

Last week: This week we lost Madeleine Albright, who became the first female U.S. Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton after serving as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. In 2012, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. After the Clinton years were over, Albright became an icon and an inspiration to young women looking for equality and respect in the workplace. One of her classic lines was "there's a special place in hell for women who don't support each other." She will be remembered as a trailblazer who left a mark on the world with her deep compassion for humanity.

Looking ahead: This pandemic highlighted the importance of teaching solid financial habits to young people. While Broward County schools had already voted to mandate a high school financial literacy course, this week Florida became the largest and 11th state to add it as a requirement for high school graduation. There are now 54 personal finance education bills pending in 26 states - strong indication

that states are recognizing its importance student success. This course will provide a foundation for every student to have access to education around the basics of money management, understanding debt, budgeting, savings and investing. It was overdue for personal finance to be seen as essential!



Wendy Sartory Link, supervisor of elections, Palm Beach County

Last week: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 was Election Day in the municipal run-off elections in six municipalities across Palm Beach County. When the polls closed at 7 p.m. on Election Day, over 20,000 voters in Boynton Beach, Lake Worth Beach, Lantana, Jupiter, Jupiter Inlet Colony and Riviera Beach cast their ballot either by mail or on Election Day. Our elections team is proud to serve the voters of Palm Beach County and would like to thank the voters, poll workers and municipal clerks who helped make these elections

 **SECTIONS**

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Looking ahead: With Women's History Month ending soon, it's important to reflect on what we are doing to promote gender equality and recommit ourselves to carrying forward our efforts in the coming year. I've worked tirelessly at the elections office to create a gender-empowered workplace where women are supported and respected by their colleagues. Upon becoming supervisor, one of my first actions was reviewing the work being done by women and ensuring they were being paid the same as men doing the same work. I'm also committed to mentoring younger women so they can achieve greater success, whatever that means to them.



John "Jack" P. Seiler, former mayor, Fort Lauderdale

Last week: Nova Southeastern University Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine (NSU MD) celebrated its first Match Day as every graduate of the historic first graduating class received prestigious residency assignments at hospitals and health care facilities across the country. Under the extraordinarily visionary leadership of NSU President Dr. George Hanbury and NSU MD Dean and Chief Academic Officer Johannes W. Vieweg, M.D., along with the exceptional efforts of the outstanding NSU MD

faculty and staff, this medical school has achieved tremendous academic and research success.

Looking ahead: Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, who has deep personal and family ties to South Florida, concluded her two long days of intense questioning by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Throughout her hearings, Judge Jackson has defended her substantial experience and impressive credentials as she endured criticism from Republican senators on her judicial philosophy and legal record. It appears that all the Democratic senators but just a few Republican senators will support her nomination when the Senate Judiciary Committee votes on her Supreme Court nomination.



Tom Shea, chairman & founder, Right Management

Last week: Employers are attempting to retain their current talent by investing in trainings. According to data collected from a learning technology firm, 67% of human resource managers expect to increase their learning and development budget in 2022. More than half of the companies surveyed say the talent shortage has caused a skills gap in the workforce. Human-resources leaders plan to provide current employees with upskilling (59%) and reskilling (55%) training this year. These companies are also getting creative by offering training to support formerly retired employees reenter the workforce.

Looking ahead: There's been a major shift in the senior living industry. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 73 million baby boomers in America and each year, 3 million of them turn 65. While all will not opt for senior living communities, at that rate, the existing facilities' capacity will be full by 2030. The pandemic forced many boomers and facilities to adapt and embrace technology to replace the usual face-to-face engagements – from seeing family and friends to medical visits. As capacity increases and talent shortages remain, the use of technology in senior living facilities is likely here to stay.

Kelly Skidmore, member, Florida House of Representatives



Last week: Rent and home prices across Florida are out of control. With rents through the roof and the price of a house out of reach for most Floridians, working families are barely making ends meet. Florida leads the nation in housing unaffordability, with over 56% of renters spending 30% or more of their income on housing. While Florida families struggle to find an affordable place to live, their state leaders are focusing their energy waging a culture war on individual freedoms. It's time for leadership to quit playing politics and start addressing the real issues affecting Floridians. Our residents deserve better.



Eleanor Sobel, former member, Florida Senate

Last week: Violence against women has increased in recent years. The Florida Legislature fails to recognize gender-based violence as a hate crime. Although federal laws recognize gender as a protected status, only 16 states include gender identity in their hate crime statutes. Such states must alter their laws to combat the violence perpetuated by male supremacists and incels. In Florida, when an incel murdered two women and injured four others at a yoga studio, the assault was not considered a hate crime. However, the perpetrator was clearly motivated by his resentment toward women, and our laws must reflect such targeted attacks.

Looking ahead: Monday marked the beginning of Ketanji Brown Jackson's confirmation hearings. Last month, President Joe Biden nominated Jackson to the Supreme Court to replace Justice Stephen Breyer. If approved, Jackson would be the first Black woman to ever serve on the Supreme Court. Jackson graduated from Harvard Law School, has clerked for multiple federal judges, and has experience as both a public defender and a private attorney. Although various Republican senators attempted to incite political disputes by questioning Jackson's bias, she proudly announced that she decides cases from a neutral perspective and has done so for nearly a decade as a federal judge.

Nick Sortal, member, Plantation City Council



Last week: I received a notice of home insurance cancellation from our carrier this week. As state Sen. Jeff Brandes, R-St. Petersburg, told WFOR's Jim DeFede: "Consumers are on life support. Six companies have pulled out of Florida ... this is a market that's in collapse ... the state of Florida getting involved in the immigration world, the 'Stop WOKE Act,' the 'Don't Say Gay' bill, those types of nationalized issues that are meant for the national audience. Meanwhile, we have real problems of property insurance and auto insurance and housing." Some carriers are asking for a 100% rate increase.



Gregory Stuart, executive director, Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization

Looking ahead: Economists are reporting the value of owning and maintaining a car, including fuel, has increased 17% across the country. We have built ourselves into this problem with urban sprawl. The Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization uses modern transportation solutions to connect where people live with where they need to go. The next step is to build more dense neighborhoods along our corridors and in our downtowns, so residents have the option to live in a community that is a short walk or bike-ride away from all of their needs. These efforts can reduce transportation costs, relieve traffic and build communities. It may even reduce traffic in your own neighborhood. Our goal is to build a better Broward.



Gregory Tony, Broward Sheriff

Last week: What a way to celebrate spring break! When Pompano Beach High School challenged BSO's Pompano Beach District to a friendly competition to help those experiencing homelessness, our team jumped at the opportunity. The challenge was to see who could collect the most nonperishable food items and other necessities. When everything was tallied, Pompano Beach High School collected more than 1,000 items, and BSO hauled in pallets of essentials. In the end, everyone was a winner. Not only did those in need benefit, but the spirit of

competition strengthened the relationship between our student population and BSO, bringing us closer together.



Dean Trantalis, mayor, Fort Lauderdale

Last week: Last week, the City Commission voted to enter into a comprehensive agreement with One Stop FTL, LLC, to bring an arts park and cultural center to 301 N. Andrews Avenue in Fort Lauderdale. After 20 months of city meetings, including over 12 hours of public comment from the community, I believe this park will be a treasure for all the city to enjoy. One Stop FTL will invest \$100 million of their own capital to reimagine this space. The city is paying out nothing, will receive \$1.5 million a year in rent, and will continue to own the land. Two-thirds of the property will be dedicated to park space, and residents will be able to offer their input into its design. The cultural center and food emporium will continue our efforts to boost downtown as a cosmopolitan designation. Once completed, the park is sure to be a cherished community space that connects the growing population of downtown Fort Lauderdale.

Looking ahead: April is Autism Acceptance Month, and Fort Lauderdale is partnering with the Dan Marino Foundation to uplift a message of support and get the word out that we are lighting our city up blue! Throughout April, you'll see a PSA with Dan Marino and me as we remind all of Fort Lauderdale to show our love and support to our children, neighbors and friends with autism. We are also encouraging businesses and residents to light up their buildings, stores and homes with blue lighting all month long in a show of solidarity. The month begins next Friday with a "Light It Up Blue" kickoff at the new Tru Hotel on Northwest First Avenue. We hope to see you there!



Michael Udine, mayor, Broward County

Last week: Can you spell coterie? Well seventh-grader Brody Santos of Saint Mark's Episcopal School can. He was the winner of the Broward County Spelling Bee. His win means he will represent the county at the Scripps National Spelling Bee! Participants were the winners of their own school competitions and ranged from

grades 1-8. The competition began with 49 participants until the final spelldown, when a winner was declared. I would like to wish Brody and his family the best of luck and great spelling as they take the hopes of Broward County to Washington and compete for the championship.

Looking ahead: Are you a sports fan in Broward County? Things got interesting with the NHL trade deadline passing on Monday. Our Florida Panthers are going for it this year. From acquisitions of top players on the trade market like Claude Giroux and Ben Chiarot, along with Robert Hagg, our Panthers are ready to make a deep run. The team is poised for this, and everyone is ready to get “Cup Crazy,” because it’s all about winning a Stanley Cup. I am looking forward to the upcoming months as we rally around our hometown team! See you at FLA Live Arena!



Chad Van Horn, founding partner attorney, Van Horn Law Group, P.A.

Last week: “Springing forward” is heading to the chopping block as the U.S. Senate voted to make Daylight Saving Time permanent. The Sunshine Protection Act, spearheaded by Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, will now go to the House of Representatives, and if passed, to the president for signature. I don’t know about you, but I’ll be relieved to quit springing forward and falling back year after year. I’m hopeful this legislation clears the House and becomes law.

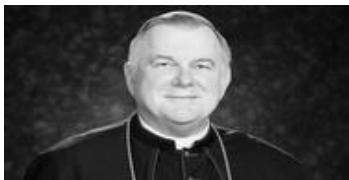
Looking ahead: Consumers with unpaid medical debt will soon see the ding on their credit report disappear as credit-reporting firms will pull tens of billions in medical debt from consumers’ credit reports. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reports that \$88 billion in medical bills sits on 43 million credit reports in the U.S. Yet while this effort will improve credit reports, the debt still remains. Approximately 65% of bankruptcies are spurred by unexpected medical expenses. This dispels the perception that those who file for bankruptcy are simply frivolous spenders. Most people file bankruptcy because they couldn’t pay huge medical bills.

Robert Weinroth, mayor, Palm Beach County



Last week: The 36th Annual Palm Beach International Boat Show was held in West Palm Beach and featured over \$1.6 billion worth of vessels ranging from superyachts to paddleboards. This four-day event sold more large yachts than any other show in the nation, and over 50,000 were expected to attend. Organizers reported 2021 was the best show they've had in 35 years, exceeding expectations for sales. They predicted 2022 will be even better, and it was a hit based on the initial reports! Overall, the event has a \$383 million economic impact statewide while generating over \$3 million in local spending.

Looking ahead: Thousands of Floridians drive with a suspended license due to unpaid traffic tickets, fines or other court obligations. Starting March 28, Palm Beach County (along with other counties) helps residents reinstate their driver license, virtually, through Operation Green Light sponsored by Florida's Clerk of Court offices. Residents will be required to pay overdue court-ordered obligations but will save on additional collection fees. In 2019 and 2021, more than 24,000 Florida drivers had their licenses reinstated with this program. Operation Green Light only runs through April 1, 2022. For more information on how to get back on the road, visit MyPalmBeachClerk.com.



Thomas Wenski, archbishop, Archdiocese of Miami

Last week: On Friday, March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, Pope Francis, along with bishops across the globe, “entrusted” Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was an unusual and dramatic gesture to “storm heaven” with prayers for peace. These prayers are not meant so much as to “move” God but to “move” us. The violence will end and painful cries of all those who suffer will be heard when human hearts turn to the Lord and, like Mary on the day of the Annunciation say, “Fiat,” “May it be done unto me according to Your will.”

Looking ahead: The U.S. immigration system is overly complex and unjust, often keeping family members apart; it must be fixed. While a country has the right to regulate its borders, at the same time, people have the fundamental right to migrate to preserve their lives and families. Each person, including the newcomer, is a brother or sister to us all. We must acknowledge not only the inherent dignity

of immigrants but also embrace their contributions and potential. We must reject the false choice between our security and our humanity. Our great nation is capable of safeguarding both our humanity and our security.



Matt Willhite, member, Florida House of Representatives

Last week: Many people are hyper-focused on the nomination hearings of Judge Ketanji Jackson Brown to the United States Supreme Court. People listen when anyone is up for a lifetime appointment to the nation's highest court. But these hearings have a historical significance. If the Senate confirms, Judge Brown Jackson will be the first Black female to sit on the Supreme Court. During the hearings, we have watched as certain U.S. senators have chosen to use this time to experiment with soundbites, but this political theater shouldn't sway us. In the words of Sen. Cory Booker, Judge Brown Jackson has "earned this moment in history, she is worthy, she is truly a great American."

Looking ahead: As the price of homes, repairs and property insurance continues to increase throughout Florida, municipalities are stepping up to assist their residents. Many lower- and moderate-income residents, many of them older and living in older houses, are struggling to repair roofs, air-conditioning, electrical and plumbing systems. The village of Wellington recently announced plans to consider a partnership with the State Housing Initiatives Partnership that would provide \$414,000 to help residents. Other cities like Boca Raton and West Palm Beach have already used the SHIP program within their communities, and I'd like to see Wellington and other municipalities work to provide similar assistance.



Patricia Williams, member, Florida House of Representatives

Last week: The 2022 legislative session concluded March 14, 2022. This is a busy time for me as I transition back to my family and the constituents of District 92. The first two weeks of this session were successful and seemed very promising for me. I received great traction and attention on filed bills and appropriation projects. This year the budget is \$112

billion, the highest ever in the State of Florida! I requested a meeting with the governor to discuss a multitude of issues that affect Florida's urban, inner-city communities, and legislative priorities.



Beverly Williams, vice mayor, Lauderdale Lakes; president, Broward League of Cities

Last week: I want to thank our Broward Legislative Delegation and so many of our municipal elected officials who worked together throughout the 2022 legislative session protecting and advocating for home rule. Home rule allows cities to govern at the local level, separate from state mandates. One of the most significant bills that failed to make it out of committee dealt with short-term/vacation rental homes. Without a united effort, this bill would have directly impacted the quality of life for our residents as well as a continued decrease in home rule authority for Broward's 31 cities.

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