

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

--MEMORANDUM--



TO: City Commission, City Manager, Chelsea Granell

FROM: Commissioner Melissa Castro

DATE: January 22, 2026

SUBJECT: Notice of Absence from Tuesday City Commission Meeting – Florida League of Cities Legislative Action Days (Tallahassee)

This memorandum is to formally notify the Mayor and City Commission that I will be unable to attend the next regular City Commission meeting on **Tuesday, January 27, 2026**, because I will be in **Tallahassee** participating in the **Florida League of Cities (FLC) Legislative Action Days** until Wednesday.

As I stated on the record during our **January 13, 2026** City Commission meeting, this travel is not optional or personal. It is part of my responsibilities representing **Coral Gables** within statewide municipal advocacy work, and it directly impacts our residents, our budget stability, and the City's ability to govern locally.

Why this work matters to Coral Gables

During the 2026 Legislative Session, multiple bills are moving that would significantly affect:

- **Local government revenues** (property tax proposals and other funding limitations)
- **Municipal home rule authority** (state preemption and restrictions on local policy decisions)
- **Public safety and essential services funding stability** (constraints and mandates tied to budgets)

FLC Legislative Action Days is where city officials meet directly with **Senators, State Representatives, and key committee staff** to advocate for (or oppose) specific proposals while they are actively advancing.

This advocacy is designed to ensure Coral Gables and other Florida cities are not forced into unfunded mandates, restricted revenue capacity, or reduced local control over planning, infrastructure, and public safety.

Summary of what I will be doing in Tallahassee (January 26–28)

During Legislative Action Days, my work will include:

1. **Coordinated Miami-Dade legislative team strategy**
 - Participating in team briefings and coordinated advocacy to ensure our region presents consistent, informed positions.
2. **Direct Capitol engagement**
 - **Capitol visits and meetings** with Senators and State Representatives to communicate municipal impacts, provide local examples, and advocate for amendments or opposition/support as appropriate.
3. **FLC advocacy programming**
 - Participating in the formal FLC agenda, including:
 - Registration and official briefings
 - Continuing education in ethics workshop
 - Capitol tour with FLC staff
 - Advocacy strategy session
 - Team legislative meeting and scheduled Capitol visits
4. **Bill tracking and action**
 - Monitoring hearings and committee movement, and coordinating advocacy responses as bills evolve in real time.

Key policy areas and bills being addressed (high-level)

Below are examples of major legislative items currently being tracked through FLC and local government advocates. These are not abstract policy debates; they directly influence Coral Gables' operational capacity and our residents' day-to-day services.

A. Property tax proposals and municipal revenue stability

FLC is tracking a number of property tax-related proposals that could materially reduce municipal revenue growth and/or create new constraints tied to public safety budgets. For example, bills addressing phased-in homestead exemptions and other assessment and exemption changes include provisions intended to prevent reductions in first-responder budgets while still potentially creating revenue pressure on cities.

B. Local Business Tax (LBT) authority

Proposals such as **HB 103** and **SB 122** would repeal Chapter 205, Florida Statutes, and eliminate local governments' ability to levy a local business tax (with a narrow exception for certain gross-receipts structures).

C. Emergency management and post-disaster land use authority

FLC is actively tracking major proposals modifying how and when cities can enforce land-use, planning, and permitting rules after disasters, including differing approaches between **SB 840 (Support)** and **HB 1465 (Oppose)**—with very different impacts on municipal authority and the

ability to manage development review timelines and local planning decisions following storm events.

D. Additional FLC “spotlight” issues affecting cities statewide

FLC is also tracking key issues affecting municipal operations and authority, including Live Local Act-related bills, impact fee proposals, local government land development regulation restrictions, utility-related revenue changes, and suits against government proposals.

Goal and expected outcome

The goal of my attendance is straightforward:

- **Protect Coral Gables’ fiscal stability**
- **Defend municipal authority to govern locally**
- **Prevent unfunded mandates and harmful preemptions**
- **Advocate for balanced legislation that supports residents without destabilizing city services**

This is core, front-line work that directly affects the City’s ability to fund police, fire, infrastructure, parks, sanitation, and day-to-day quality-of-life services, without shifting burdens onto residents through service reductions or reactive budgeting.

Attachments

For transparency and documentation, I am attaching:

- [FLC legislative bill highlights and tracking summaries, including positions \(Support/Oppose/Monitor\) and key impacts on municipalities](#)

Clarification regarding attendance and public funds

For the avoidance of any doubt, my absence from the January 27, 2026 City Commission meeting is **for cause, disclosed in advance, and directly tied to my official duties as a Commissioner**. Representing Coral Gables in Tallahassee during active legislative deliberations is not ancillary to my role; it is a core function of responsible municipal leadership.

This work protects Coral Gables from decisions made without local input and mitigates far greater long-term costs to taxpayers that can result from unchecked preemption, revenue loss, or unfunded mandates. Any implication that this absence reflects a lack of commitment to City business, or that it constitutes an improper use of public resources, would be inaccurate and contrary to the record.

Availability

While I will be in Tallahassee, I will remain reachable for urgent matters by phone/text and will follow up promptly on any time-sensitive City issues that arise during the meeting.

Respectfully,
Melissa Castro
City Commissioner
City of Coral Gables