100 of South Florida’s most influential people weigh in on current events. Read their thoughts on the biggest stories of the week and see what they think will make headlines next week.

**Mitchell W. Berger, founder and co-chair, Berger Singerman**

Last week: We watch as those who are confronted with a decision between supporting Donald Trump for President and remaining true to integrity and principles are confronted with the same choice confronting Alexander Hamilton in 1800. Do you support a person you disagree with or the person of the same party who has no principles or integrity? The nation was saved when Hamilton supported Jefferson against Burr. What will the modern Hamiltonians do?

Looking ahead: The President will be visiting Hiroshima to emphasize the devastation nuclear war can bring in an area of the world where North Korea is developing nuclear weapons and threatening South Korea and Japan. China instead of acting as a force for peace and stability continues to act to destabilize the south china sea region and encourage North Korea. We again become the indispensable nation responsible for international security. There is no one else to lead.

**Richard Berkowitz, CEO, Berkowitz Pollack Brant Advisors and Accountants**

Looking ahead: Our community is uniquely suited to become the Silicon Valley of the marine industry due to our warm water, beautiful ports and our highly regarded academic institutions and their marine research capabilities. Working together we can enhance South Florida’s ability to attract top research talent and create jobs from new capital investments. A South Florida regional effort led by members of the Broward Workshop, the Ft. Lauderdale Alliance, the Beacon Council and our Chambers can band together and be the catalyst to expand our burgeoning marine research industry.
Walter G. "Skip" Campbell, Jr., mayor, Coral Springs; former member, Florida Senate

Looking ahead: I have always believed that if we Americans were going to lose the values and principles of our democratic process that it would be taken away by some foreign force. It might still come that way, but I am more concerned that it will come slowly produced by apathy, indifference or just not caring for our system of democracy. This means that all Americans must look at the values of the two candidates and vote for what you believe will be best for the country. Don’t let apathy or indifference keep you from the ballot box.

Kathleen Cannon, president, United Way of Broward County

Looking ahead: Opiate use, including prescription opioid use, has reached an epidemic level in the United States. Florida has the third highest rate of overdose. In Broward County, the overdose rate for heroin and associated opiate analogs, such as fentanyl, has increased significantly. This year alone, we are on track to see an increase in overdoses by 40%. In light of Prince’s death and others please join our community’s fight by visiting DrugFreeBroward.org and let’s save lives.

Linda B. Carter, president, Community Foundation of Broward

Last week: This week’s Bank rate study that ranked Florida as the 31st best state for seniors is a gloomy way to kick off Older Americans’ Month. The study sounds the alarm that many older South Floridians are struggling, despite our reputation as retiree paradise. Florida has the nation’s highest concentration of older Americans and Broward has Florida’s fastest growing population of people over 85. Half of these residents report needing help with everyday activities. With statistics like this shouldn’t our community top the list in the provision of care and services older residents need to age with dignity?

Paul Castronovo, host, Paul & Young Ron Show

Last week: Well, I might as well come out and say it. Prince is my Dad. Why not join the fun? So far over 700 people are claiming to be related. The latest is a 39 year old “inmate” in a maximum security prison who says that his Mom had sex with Prince in the 70’s (who didn’t?) and that he demands a DNA test. Really, dude? You’re 39, now you want the test? If you thought your Dad was Prince, worth $300 million, wouldn’t you have come around sooner? My Son is 16 and it seems like he’s asking me for 20 bucks every day!
Looking ahead: I’m looking forward to the Olympics in Rio, as long I don’t have to go to. Heck, my Brazilian friends don’t want to go! First, there’s the Zika virus (mosquito’s, run for your life!). Then there’s the violence, which lead one of Brazil’s biggest soccer stars, Rivaldo to say, “I advise everyone visiting Brazil to stay in their country. Here you will be running the risk of life”. Not exactly a ringing endorsement. And finally, there’s Guanabara Bay, site of many Olympic events and is polluted with raw sewage (Jump in kids, the waters great!). Maybe they should have the next Olympics in Kabul.

Joy Cooper, mayor, Hallandale Beach

Last week: As cities move forward with the Infrastructure Surtax proposal it needs to be noted there is nothing preventing the county and cities committing dollars to transportation infrastructure. There are two major differences, rather than 70/30 split between county and cities respectively it will be a 40/60 split and the revenues cannot be used for operations and maintenance. This sales tax still will be transforming for our county and cities by providing much need revenues directly to address our residents’ priorities. It will take pressure off the dependency on property taxes and 30 percent will come from tourism expenditures.

Looking ahead: Americas Mayors around our country are taking the necessary steps to raise the minimum wage while congress sits still at gridlock over many issues! Hallandale Beach and other cities here in South Florida have already made the move. As usual Mayors are the ones to get things done!

Pastor D.H. Dawkins Sr., Praise Tabernacle International

Last week: So tsa maybe replaced in Atlanta and NY airports due to the high amount of long lines and delays. They are considering hiring a private security company in their place. This is significant to people, like myself, who travel often. This should be interesting.

Looking ahead: The NAACP has invited Donald Trump to be a guest speaker at this year’s convention. As Arsenio Hall used to say, "things that make you go hmmm."
Michael De Lucca, president, Broward Regional Health Planning Council, Inc.

Last week: Walker Grocery, a cornerstone of the Sistrunk community since 1939, has been awarded “The Good Neighbor Store.” The family-run store is a longtime partner with the YMCA of South Florida in collaboration with TOUCH Healthy Community Zone initiative. Walker’s does not sell alcohol or tobacco products. The store is a positive influence in the community, a safe place and a trusted business. Students are working with the store to promote nutritious food choices by placing healthier options near the front of the store. Sugary snacks are moved away from point-of-sale. Students are learning what they eat affects their health.

Looking ahead: BRHPC is offering a free Community Health Worker Orientation Training as part of the TOUCH Healthy Community Zone initiative. All community health advocates are invited to attend the workshop. Learn to help others connect to the Health Resources in your community, while building your skills. Trainings will be held in Lauderhill and Ft. Lauderdale on Thursday, May 19th and in Dania Beach on Thursday, June 2nd, 2016. You will learn about the Florida Certification Board Application as well as the CHW Certification Process and Requirements. Space is limited, register now at www.touchbroward.org/hcz/CHWTraining or call 786-224-2309.

Dr. Michael Dennis, chairman, Florida Atlantic University Schmidt College of Medicine

Last week: Recently the Department of Health and Human Services suggested that doctors and hospitals – even businesses and churches - work more closely with social service providers to keep people healthier and less likely to need costly hospitalizations and treatments. It has been well known for quite some time that states that spend more on public health programs have much healthier residents than those states which ignore this alternative. Providing home visits, nutrition support, and other services is an effective way to assist the needy. It also encourages more efficient use of government funds, not simply increasing the budgets. South Florida is becoming attentive to this concept.

Looking ahead: John Kerry may be as deceitful as our last Secretary of State. The American people have just learned that in a desperate attempt to produce a deal with Iran, lies were abundant. We were not negotiating with a new, reasonable centrist group, but the hard core theocrats. Demonstrators still scream “Death to America” in the streets with impunity. Iran still wants to destroy Israel. They flaunt their missiles recklessly and interfere with peace in Syria. Kerry even admitted that some of the funds released will go to terrorist activity. Yet he chastises our businesses for not entering into trade agreements. Why would they? They are faithful Americans.
Ted Deutch, member, U.S. House of Representatives

Last week: The House of Representatives approved legislation addressing the growing opioid epidemic. Floridians know this problem too well, with 447 heroin related deaths in 2014, a 125% increase from 2014 and a 684% increase from 2011. Properly confronting opioid addiction in our community requires broad cooperation among state and local governments, mental health providers, law enforcement agencies, and religious and community support organizations. These partnerships can appropriately and respectfully treat friends and family members suffering from addiction and develop effective preventative measures to curb this health crisis.

Looking ahead: On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy told a joint session of Congress that America would put a man on the moon before 1970, and we did. On Friday, I will tell elementary and high school students and Nova Southeastern University graduates that, like President Kennedy’s moonshot speech, we should boldly face our future. Thanks to Jett and Luke, two second grade students in South Florida, for inspiring me to introduce a resolution next week to designate May 25 as Moonshot Day, a day to think about big goals for America to achieve.

Andrew Duffell, president, Research Park at Florida Atlantic University

Last week: Palm Beach County government took the lead in re-evaluating the flood maps handed down by FEMA in 2013 and the result is that tens of thousands of homes are now shown to not be in high flood risk areas. Therefore flood insurance is more affordable and not mandatory. The maps FEMA was using were, in some cases, 30 years old. The millions of dollars saved through the leadership of Palm Beach County in developing the new maps is a good example of why as much policy-making and governance as possible should be left as close to the people as possible.

Howard Finkelstein, chief public defender, Broward County

Last week: Last week I was effectively re-elected to another four year term after no one filed to run against me. I am very grateful and honored and will continue to be the voice for the poor and powerless. I will continue to apply my moral compass to the issues confronting this community and challenge the two systems of justice that remain embedded in our criminal justice system – one for the wealthy and powerful and one for the poor and marginalized.
Rabbi Sheldon Harr, Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El

Looking ahead: I was privileged to participate in the named dedication of the Miami Regional Headquarters of the F.B.I. in Miramar, in my capacity as a chaplain with the F.B.I. It was a moving tribute to Special Agents Benjamin Grogan and Jerry Love, who were murdered in the line of duty 30 years ago. This ceremony served to remind the thousand or so persons present that freedom is not free. Director James Comey noted that tragically, either as innocent by-standers or as active combatants, too often lives are loss. We are all indebted to the F.B.I. and our other protective and military agencies for the most-often unsung tasks they perform every day, and for the ultimate sacrifice that too many must pay.

Susan Haynie, mayor, Boca Raton

Last week: The biggest story this past week was the news that a federal judge blocked the proposed merger between Office Depot and Staples. The good news for Boca Raton is that it will allow Office Depot's 2,000+ employees to remain employed in our City. The concern is, their long-term sustainability as a stand-alone company. I will be meeting with Office Depot's leadership in the next few weeks to discuss how the City can best provide them with the assistance needed to help them continue to succeed in Boca Raton.

Looking ahead: The Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches has filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Boca Raton and the operators of student housing developments in Boca Raton. The suit alleges discrimination in rental housing. The student housing is designed to accommodate students from FAU, Lynn University and PBSC. The suit states that the zoning restrictions addressing student housing discriminate because they do not provide for the accommodation of minor children of the college students. Similar student housing developments are sited adjacent to every large university in Florida. I am not sure why they have chosen to challenge Boca Raton.

About Marlon A. Hill, partner, Hamilton, Miller & Birthsel

Last week: It concerns me that our democracy has arrived at a place where some of us would consider not voting in the upcoming presidential election. Despite the choices that are inevitably on course for nomination, it is critically more important that all voters remain engaged. In fact, due to the indifferences and frustrations at play, it is probably more important than ever that we exert our forceful voices in the precursor of the election and at the ballot box on November 8th. Democracy demands no day offs. Democracy requires resilience in the face
of skepticism. Democracy calls for the expression of needs of the voiceless. We will have more than enough time from impending national debates to help us along with our apathy. Until then, I encourage those of us throwing a tantrum not to vote in the schoolyard playpens to dry the tears, pull up your britches, and act like the big boys and girls our Founding Fathers hoped we would be for the good of the Republic.

Hava Leipzig Holzhauer, regional director, Florida Anti-Defamation League

Last week: Much attention has focused recently on not permitting Transgender individuals to access restrooms of their gender identity. Some have said the impetus for these measures is to ensure that pedophiles of an opposite sex will not be able to enter bathrooms with children. Let’s be clear: the Nazi law against overcrowding in schools and universities wasn’t about overcrowding. U.S. laws requiring segregation in use of public transportation were not about buses. This is not about bathrooms, nor about dangers from potential pedophiles (who btw can currently enter bathrooms with children). This is discrimination based on unfounded fear and misinformation. Let’s use our laws more wisely and not in ways which promote bigotry.

Scott J. Israel, sheriff, Broward County

Last week: This week, BSO honored 11-year-old hero Angel Rivera, who bravely dove into the deep end of a Deerfield Beach pool on April 24 and pulled a drowning 13-year-old girl to safety. Sadly, for too many children in South Florida, there won’t be an angel around to save them. Next month, thousands of children will ditch their school backpacks and descend upon the countless pools and beaches in our region. As we observe Water Safety Month, take a moment to teach your sons and daughters the importance of water safety, and visit sheriff.org for drowning prevention information. Together, we can prevent tragedy.

Marty Kiar, commissioner, Broward County

Looking ahead: Broward is encountering a re-emergence of the Opiate epidemic. Heroin use is rising at an alarming rate. In Fiscal Year 2015, the Broward Addiction Recovery Center provided Triage Services to 440 Heroin users seeking Detoxification Services. In the first six months of Fiscal Year 2016, the number has risen to 803. In 2015, Heroin use caused 54 deaths; in 2016 the number is anticipated to be at 80, and doubles to 160 when Fentanyl is
combined with Heroin. Broward is in the process of developing a comprehensive action plan to provide awareness, education, and treatment to fight this epidemic.

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**Chip LaMarca, member, Broward County Commission**

Last week: This week we celebrated one of Broward County’s most historic buildings, the Sample-McDougald House, celebrating its 100th anniversary. Built in 1916, this distinctive historic structure is an important part of Broward County's heritage. There are relatively few historic buildings in Broward County dating to the early years of the twentieth century, and the Sample-McDougald House is one of those pre-1920 buildings that has survived the many storms and changes in Broward County. It even survived being moved from its original location on Dixie Highway. Our historic sites provide us with educational and entertainment opportunities, connecting residents and visitors with our region’s fascinating heritage.

Looking ahead: As we continue to discuss the topic of transportation in Broward County it is important to also learn how many counties are leveraging technology innovations to improve transportation systems and make an effort to improve systems for the future. Next week the National Association of Counties will hold a webinar providing for technology experts to discuss national trends and current county projects in the field of transportation. Transportation is such a vital aspect in any community affecting resident’s quality of life and economic impact that continuing on a path of knowledge to improve Broward County's transportation challenges can be beneficial.

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**Ina Lee, president Travelhost Elite of Greater Fort Lauderdale**

Last week: After months of speculation and a national search that the business community wanted, our County Administrator Bertha Henry selected Stacy Ritter to head up our Convention & Visitors Bureau when Nicki Grossman retires at the end of May. The hospitality industry will unite to work with her to bring our destination to new heights and continued prosperity.

Looking ahead: The Fort Lauderdale City Commission voted 4 to 1 to move forward with the proposed Bahia Mar redevelopment. Although there is still more negotiations ahead, Bahia Mar now has the opportunity to become a world-class destination and upscale, permanent home for the Boat Show.
**Gerry Litrento, senior executive vice president, BankUnited**

Looking ahead: Jody Leshinsky will be preparing to retire from Broward County government after 35 years of public service, the last 29 of which have been with the Broward Cultural Division where she is currently assistant director. While much has been written about the changes in leadership at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, Jody has been instrumental in nurturing the arts organizations and artists that make Fort Lauderdale a great destination and a vibrant place to live. I thank her for years of passionate and dedicated service and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

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**Earl Maucker, commissioner, Lighthouse Point; former editor, Sun Sentinel**

Last week: Surprise, surprise. Broward County Manager Bertha Henry gave the nod to Commissioner Stacy Ritter for the region’s top tourism job. The positive among us would acknowledge that Stacy is a smart, dedicated county employee, full of energy and rarin’ to make her mark. The cynics among us might wonder why in the world would you pick someone whom the professionals in the business recommended against, has no experience and had been the target of three separate investigations for public corruption - ultimately cleared for lack of evidence. The realists among us would simply say, Broward politics at its finest.

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**Clarence V. McKee, president, McKee Communications**

Last week: Congratulations to the 100 black ministers from throughout Florida this past week who urged the NAACP to drop a lawsuit with the Florida teachers’ union challenging the use of tax credit scholarships for private school students. As Pastor R.B. Holmes of Tallahassee said, the NAACP was “on the wrong side of history.” If successful, 78,000 poor mostly black and Hispanic children will be removed from private schools where “they are thriving, and returned to public schools where they were not. This would be a monumental injustice.” He’s right. NAACP and Union opposition to parental choice for poor parents is shameful!

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**Frank Ortis, mayor, Pembroke Pines**

Last week: We’ve got pools, canals, a rainy season almost upon us, abundant mosquitos and the most reported cases of the Zika Virus in the country. I fully understand why our governor headed to Washington last week to face Congressional leaders about combating this virus properly. More than $1 billion in emergency funding has been allocated to fight this ever-growing problem, but
Congress hasn’t approved the spending yet. I’m so tired of our country’s inability to move swiftly, especially with an emerging health crisis such as this, because of politics. Let’s push partisanship aside and let’s stop this virus in its tracks.

Looking ahead: I was surprised by recent Broward County School Board discussions regarding giving high school students A+’s because the school systems gives out B+’s, C+’s and D+’s. Why not add F+’s or even A++’s for those really extra, extra special students? I’m not sure why time is being spent discussing this, especially since plus grades are not even recognized by Florida colleges and universities, Bright Futures scholarships or the NCAA. I know we now live in a society of “participation” trophies for all and political correctness extremes, but an A still means the best. Let’s leave it at that.

Philip Purcell, executive director, Marine Industries Association of South Florida

Looking ahead: May has the highest number of boating accidents according to FWC, and with school almost out, we want to make sure people stay safe on the water this summer and all year long. That’s why we’re hosting Safe Boating Day on Sunday, May 22 at Bahia Mar. The purpose of Safe Boating Day is to educate the community and encourage a responsible dialogue. Whether it’s a car or a boat, unexpected conditions can arise that may affect the outcome. We need to get out in front of the situation so people can benefit from and enjoy our waterways safely.

Justin Sayfie, publisher, SayfieReview.com

Last week: The recent purchase of the Tampa Tribune by the Tampa Bay Times is yet another sign of newspapers’ uncertain future. Dr. Aubrey Jewett of the University of Central Florida notes that Florida’s major daily papers saw a collective 42% drop in circulation from 1998 to 2012. The largest single decrease was right here in South Florida. The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald, which once combined for the largest Sunday circulation in the state, saw that number drop 53% over 14 years. More than ever, we need newspapers to survive because they help keep government accountable to its citizens. For more information, check out Dr. Jewett’s column on SayfieReview.com: http://bit.ly/27dGuCQ
John "Jack" P. Seiler, mayor, Fort Lauderdale

Last week: The City Commission moved one step closer to securing the permanent home for the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show when it approved, on first reading, substantially revised and reduced plans for the proposed Bahia Mar redevelopment. The final redevelopment and lease approvals remain contingent upon the developer reaching a formal agreement with Boat Show organizers to keep the event in Fort Lauderdale for the next three decades. With over a half billion dollars in annual economic impact, it is critical that we keep the Boat Show here to fuel the continued growth and expansion of our marine industry, create more and better jobs, and stimulate economic development opportunities today and for future generations.

Looking ahead: On Wednesday, May 18, Fort Lauderdale will host its Fifth Annual Transportation Summit from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm at the Broward Center’s Huizenga Pavilion (201 SW 5 Avenue). Industry experts will lead discussions on topics including Vision Zero, public advocacy, land use, street design, and best practices to achieve safe, livable, connected, and sustainable streets for people of all ages and abilities. Keynote speaker Ryan Gravel will share insights on the Atlanta Beltline, Atlanta’s largest transportation and economic development initiative. Please join us as we work together to shape the future of transportation in Fort Lauderdale. For details, please visit www.fortlauderdale.gov.

Ian S. Seitel, attorney, Ian Seitel P.A.

Last week: Judge Milton Hirsch of Miami ruled that Florida’s new death penalty scheme, which allows for the imposition of death with a less than a unanimous vote by the jury, is unconstitutional. Florida, with its long tradition of being an outlier, is one of only three states that does not require unanimity. As an attorney who has handled death penalty cases, I have seen the capriciousness to which the state sometimes seeks the ultimate penalty. Requiring a unanimous verdict is one of our sacred constitutional safeguards. Kudos to Judge Hirsch.

Kelley Shanley, president, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Broward Center for the Performing Arts

Last week: We lost a leader in the cultural community and development of downtown Fort Lauderdale with the passing of Patrick Flynn. A former chair of what is today the Broward Cultural Council, Patrick also held leadership positions with the Opera Guild of Fort Lauderdale, Florida Grand Opera, the Museum of Discovery and Science and was a member of the Riverwalk Trust. He played a great role in creating the quality of life we enjoy today and made an
immeasurable impact on the cultural landscape of South Florida.

Barbara M. Sharief, mayor, Broward County

Looking ahead: The 4th annual “Autism in Flight” program will occur at the this week. For autistic children and their families a trip to the airport can be downright frightening. When I was contacted by a family in my district with an autistic child and learned of the potential challenges they faced when using airports, I embarked on an effort to change that for all kids. This exercise is a learning experience to help reduce everyone’s level of stress and make traveling a more pleasurable experience. If these children and their families know what to expect, they’ll be more prepared and at ease; the same goes for airport personnel. During the event, children will board a aircraft and there will be a mock flight. The plane won’t actually take-off, but announcements will be made and the children and families will be served “in-flight” snacks and beverages.

Tom Shea, president, Right Management

Last week: Proving the power of a shared vision, efforts to diversify Florida’s economy are showing solid results. A new Wells Fargo report shows statewide growth in targeted industries including financial services, health care, logistics and aerospace. Eighty percent of jobs created in Florida since February 2010 were in trade, transportation and utilities, professional and business services, education and healthcare, as well as leisure and hospitality. The Economic Development organizations and all those working systematically to advance growth are helping achieve the vision.

Looking ahead: It’s terrific to see that CEOs ranked Florida second in the nation on Chief Executive Magazine’s 2016 Best and Worst States for Business list. Some factors in the ranking, including taxation, regulation and quality of life, are well recognized strengths. More revealing, though, is the CEOs’ high ranking for our state’s workforce quality. That’s a tremendous sign the message is getting through. Florida has the talent, innovative thinking, top-caliber training and educational resources to power business growth.
Howard Simon, executive director, ACLU of Florida

Last week: Last week reminded Americans how much we are still dealing with a central conflict that has plagued our nation from the drafting of the Constitution to the bloody Civil War and beyond -- a state’s “right” to deny individuals basic rights that are guaranteed to all. Today, it is at the heart of battles over voting rights in North Carolina, Texas and Florida; LGBT rights in Mississippi and North Carolina; women’s rights and access to abortion in Alabama. These all show the need for an assertive federal government acting to protect civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed to all Americans.

Looking ahead: As we go forward in this election, the pressure is on the media to improve its performance during the primaries in fulfilling its broader responsibility to not be merely entertainment – just “wires and lights in a box,” as Edward R. Murrow warned. By its questioning and reporting on the candidates, the media must provide the public with the information needed to elect a President based on policies about war and peace, the economy and economic justice, the protection of human rights, and stewardship of the planet, not who can hurl the best insults and how states will police their bathrooms.

Chris Smith, member, Florida Senate

Last week: Republicans and Democrats in Congress may be actually finding their way to passing bipartisan legislation aimed at curbing the growing epidemic of heroin and opioid abuse. It’s a long overdue change from the narrow mindset of not too long ago, when crack cocaine was decimating predominantly black families. Starting in the 80’s and still prevalent today, the only treatment offered to addicts was the kind delivered behind bars – condemning generations of people of color. The federal legislation now under debate was spurred in large part by the skyrocketing heroin addiction rates among whites, and the growing clamor for treatment over punishment.

Looking ahead: Whether this belated commitment to addiction treatment finally replaces the mantra of “zero tolerance” and mandatory long-time prison sentences, and adds in the critical component of criminal justice reform. As Congress debates its life line for the more affluent and largely white victims of opioid and heroin addiction, it needs to muster the same resolve for a life line to the victims of the failed drug wars, most of them black, and many still imprisoned.
Eleanor Sobel, member, Florida Senate

Last week: Stop the mills! Hollywood must join Margate, Plantation, Sunrise, and many other Broward cities in banning the sale of commercially bred dogs and cats. Instead of puppy mills, we should be creating better and safer markets for pet-hungry consumers. We also need to more effectively publicize and fund local shelters and other rescue organizations. Puppy mills are unethical and often purveyors of fraud: unethical because the animals are frequently kept in tiny cages, and fraudulent because they provide consumers a genetically inferior product. It’s high time we regulated this dubious industry.

Looking ahead: What price can you put on the health of millions of Floridians and the millions more who visit our state each year? Why is the GOP dragging its feet in funding the $1.9 billion Florida needs to combat Zika? Florida now has 109 documented cases of Zika, the most of any state. The virus, while causing mild sickness, has been definitively linked to severe birth defects. Democratic Senator Bill Nelson introduced legislation calling for the funding, and even Senator Rubio and Governor Scott got on board, albeit late. While not every state has mosquitoes, Zika is an issue of national concern.

Katy Sorenson, president, Good Government Initiative, University of Miami

Last week: Before Trump vs. Hillary, there’s Trump vs. Paul Ryan and the old guard GOP. Ryan would like to think that the Republican party still stands for small government, trickle-down economics, immigration solutions and scaling back entitlement programs – and is a big tent for women and minorities. Trump’s mostly white male voters aren’t buying it. They’ve figured out that the Republican party is there for oligarchs and plutocrats, and Trump stands for disruption and an end to “political correctness,” which is code for license to be bigots and misogynists. The toothpaste isn’t going back in the tube. It’s Trump’s party now.

Looking ahead: The Zika virus is coming to your neighborhood, and it’s refreshing that our Republican governor and members of Congress are taking nature and science seriously for a change. They’re imploring their Congressional colleagues to come through with funding to eradicate the mosquitoes bringing disease and birth defects. Meanwhile, in Margaritaville, residents of the Conch Republic would rather have toxic chemicals inundating their atmosphere than accept a biological solution – genetically modified mosquitoes which would dramatically reduce the infestation. The political cowardice award goes to the elected Mosquito Control Board for leaving it up to constituents to decide through referendum.
Gregory Stuart, executive director, Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization

Looking ahead: The Broward MPO has been analyzing the impacts of climate change on our transportation system and how different degrees of sea level rise would impact travel throughout the South Florida region. Our analysis of federal and state roads has been completed, and we are almost finished with our analysis of county and local roads. Once this analysis is completed, we will need to develop a mitigation strategy to ensure that future rising tides minimally impacts our transportation system. What impact do you think climate change will have on our transportation network, and what should we do about it? Let us know by emailing info@browardmpo.org or on Facebook @SpeakUpBroward.

Randall Vitale, senior VP, Gibraltar Private Bank & Trust

Looking ahead: It now looks like a one-penny surtax for “Infrastructure” will be on the November ballot for Broward residents to consider. The question now is can a coalition be built between the county, cities and the business community to organize and execute the public campaign to get it passed. Prior to giving their much needed support I believe the business community will have minimum expectations of: proper oversight of the funds, a time-certain sunset period for the tax (example: 10 years), and a set percentage allocated to economic development. Absent these three items, I believe the business community will withhold support.

Robert Weinroth, Deputy Mayor, Boca Raton

Last week: The GOP has become the party of denial with respect to anything being proposed by Congressional Democrats. The Donald has exploited the gridlock and the dynamics of a national party measuring its victories in the many ways it has derailed initiatives of the White House. The GOP’s mindset of denial allowed party regulars to dismiss Trump as a mere sideshow to the real contests in the center ring. Party loyalty, demanded of Trump at the first televised debate, seems to have become optional for the party regulars now faced with a standard bearer with whom they have little in common.

Looking ahead: The City of Boca Raton, heaved a sigh of relief with word that Office Depot and Staples will terminate their merger agreement on May 16th. The decision granting the preliminary injunction requested by the FTC, leaves Office Depot with a windfall of $250 million in breakup money. Notwithstanding the disappointment felt by many who have been forced into a holding pattern during the protracted regulatory review since the deal was first announced in February 2015, these funds should be viewed as a building block
for reengineering Office Depot into a competitive force in a market being dominated by Internet marketers.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski, Archdiocese of Miami

Last week: Food security is Haiti is a critical issue. A good instinct is to want to help; yet, first principle should be “do no harm”. Recently USDA announced that it will give 500 metric tons of peanuts to distribute to Haiti’s school children. However, some have voiced concerns that to do so might result in more long term damage to Haiti’s fragile economy and agricultural sector. Would this “gift” undermine Haitian peanut production as Bill Clinton’s policies in the 90’s of sending cheap US produced rice devastated the market for Haitian grown rice displacing hundreds of poor rice farmers?

Looking ahead: The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau plans to issue new rules regarding pay day lending. It is important to stop unscrupulous, predatory lenders who prey upon poor communities. Frequently flipped short-terms loans trap borrowers: unable to repay original loan the borrower is forced to rollover to a new loan and the lender keeps the borrower indebted paying high rates of interests with no hope of ever paying off the debt. These practices as well as high cost long term installment loans and unrealistic balloon payments create “debt traps” that the poor will never be able to escape from.