

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Vern Buchanan (R-FL13) has secured a seat on the highly sought-after House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The Florida Republican requested the Committee to fight for the state's fair share of federal funds.

"We are among the fastest growing states in the nation," said Buchanan. "State and local officials are unable to fund the roads and infrastructure needed to provide evacuation routes, improve safety, reduce congestion, and support approved growth and development in coastal areas, as well as encourage economic development in our rural counties to the east. Florida gets back less than we pay in to the federal government for roads and infrastructure. I will fight to change the funding formula to ensure that Florida gets back its fair share of federal funding for transportation."

"Our economy and quality of life are dependent upon safe, efficient and reliable methods of transportation," said the House Transportation Committee's Republican leader, Congressman John L. Mica (R-FL). "Florida and, in particular Southwest Florida, desperately needs expanded and improved highways, ports and infrastructure."

"As a successful businessman, Vern Buchanan is a welcome addition to the U.S. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, and he brings a unique perspective to the challenges facing this Committee and our nation," Rep. Mica continued. "I believe Congressman Buchanan is an outstanding choice to help Congress find cost-effective solutions that increase transportation safety and reduce the problems of growing congestion and inadequate infrastructure."

The highway trust fund receives federal taxes collected on every gallon of gas that is sold. The state receives just 87 cents back for every dollar it pays in federal gas taxes, while more rural, less populated states like Alaska receive more than they pay in federal gas taxes. At the local level, Sarasota and Manatee counties receive about 56 cents for every dollar sent to the federal government for transportation.

"A shortfall of transportation dollars to build and maintain our roads is among biggest problems we face in Sarasota County," said Sarasota County Commissioner Paul Mercier. "It is exciting for us to have Congressman Buchanan on the House Transportation Committee. He will work with us to ensure that we receive necessary funding."

"This is one of the most important and powerful appointments that we could have in Washington representing our area and we look forward to a strong relationship with Congressman Buchanan and this new role," said Manatee Chamber of Commerce President Bob Bartz. "This appointment should prove beneficial to our region as we have several billion dollars funding backlog of transportation projects."

In addition to highways, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee sets national policy and funding levels for airports, transit, rail, water resources – including beach replenishment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The freshman lawmaker has also been tapped to serve on the Committee on Small Business. This congressional committee oversees programs of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and is tasked with passing legislation to make U.S. companies more competitive so they can expand and create jobs.

"Small business is the backbone of our economy," said Buchanan. "In Florida, they provide 95 percent of all the jobs in our state. I will work to reduce regulatory and tax burdens to make it easier to establish, sustain and grow small businesses. I will also work to end frivolous lawsuits that threatened small business, provide an educated and skilled workforce, and make it easier for small business owners to provide access to health care benefits to their employees."

Buchanan is a self-made businessman who has built and maintained several successful businesses and served on the boards of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce as well as the Florida and US Chambers of Commerce.