

WLRN-MIAMI HERALD NEWS Issues and Programs Report

July-September2015

WLRN not only serves and covers a diverse area of many cultures and ethnicities but also focuses on reporting and discussing issues, individuals, stories and industries of significant importance to our many communities. We distinguish ourselves covering news of the region, nation and state and how that affects us locally from industries, businesses and elections to residents, students and neighbors. Politics, the economy, culture, healthcare, trade and education all are cornerstones of our reporting and public affairs programs.

CUBA & The Latin America Report (LATAM)

The second quarter of 2015 brought significant developments on several of our cornerstone issue fronts. One of the most notable is the changing relationship with Cuba, a topic of considerable interest to Cuban residents, the South Florida business community, investors, voters and residents.

WLRN's Latin America editor, Tim Padgett, went to Panama and covered President Obama meeting with Cuban President Raul Castro [at the Summit of the Americas](#). Days after recommendations from the State Department, President Obama shared his plan [to remove Cuba from the list of states that sponsor terrorism](#).

Padgett noted in a later report the Cuban news eclipsed the continuing breakdown in Venezuela, where police are now targets as crime and corruption rage in a country that's become an "emigration nation". South Florida has a significant Venezuelan population with the greatest concentration in Dade's Doral neighborhood and Broward's Weston community.

On the 30th anniversary of Elian Gonzalez' return to Cuba, the weekly Latin America report provided an analysis of how we came from that shocking standoff to today's more cooperative relations with the island nation. Another anniversary also captured Editor Tim Padgett's attention this quarter. He noted the 400th year of Cervantes' Don Quixote and how the novel remains relevant today. "To survive totalitarian governments, and occasionally stand up to them, it helps to be a little insane. And there's no more heroic nut in all of literature than Don Quixote, the protagonist of the classic novel of the same name by Spanish author Miguel Cervantes."

Padgett's LATAM report also covered the State Department's Twitter Q & A session about travel to Cuba and the experience of ZooMiami's most visible ambassador when he visited his father's homeland for the first time. Cuba & Technology also was a key LATAM topic: how technology access and improvements in Cuba depend more on political science than computer science; and the pilgrimage of Cuban entrepreneurs to Miami to gain web marketing and online sales expertise.

The Latin America report also introduced our audience to another major hemispheric gathering now in Miami. [“The International Economic Forum of the Americas](#), or IEFA, which has become a key platform for issues affecting the Western Hemisphere. The Montreal-based group used to hold its annual World Strategic Forum in Palm Beach County. But it aims to raise its profile now by taking advantage of Miami-Dade’s more Latin American atmosphere.”

Soccer’s corruption scandal, the Dominican Republic’s new policy deporting citizens of Haitian heritage, Puerto Rico’s financial crisis, and more were all part of the LATAM report covering news of the region of particular interest and concern to our audience over the months of April, May and June this year.

Cuba in The Sunshine Economy, Aviation, Female Leadership & More

The Sunshine Economy program explored opportunities provided by the easing of travel restrictions; allowing U.S. credit cards to be used in Cuba; expanding the list of items that can be legally exported to Cuba from America; and increasing remittances sent to Cubans from family in the U.S.

Cuba combined with aviation as a focus of The Sunshine Economy when it examined how the U.S.A.’s international policy shift affects individuals, industries and education. Programs included a look at a charter flight operator already winging from Key West to Cuba and how aviation continues to be our number one export. In 2014, almost \$4.8 billion worth of aircraft, engines and aircraft parts made in Florida were shipped out of state, putting it in the top 10 category.

Another TSE program shared how tomorrow’s aviation workers are being trained at a Miami-Dade County Public School with 550 high school students and 800 adult students taking FAA-certified classes on airframes, power plants, and avionics.

In [our continuing series on female leadership](#), host Tom Hudson looked at the technology sector - a lucrative industry and that’s been criticized for gender imbalance. Women make up only a quarter of the tech industry workforce, even though more women now enroll in college than men. And, women in Western countries use the internet 17 percent more than men. The program explored how this data computes in terms of female leadership and the concurrent wage gap.

Politics: Healthcare & the Budget

State political news always swells during the annual legislative session and WLRN embeds a full time reporter in the state capitol to supplement our permanent staffer and reports by our Florida News Exchange partners.

Key issues were explored from different vantage points by the economic and

business focused show but also by The Florida Roundup, a weekly program focused on the week's news and developments. After the state legislature's annual spring session ended abruptly in early May, a special session in June to pass a budget and possibly revisit healthcare policy became a key focus for not only the Sunshine Economy but also The Florida Roundup and regular WLRN reports and newscasts.

Each Friday, legislative session or not, WLRN's The Florida Roundup program discusses the week's news with listeners on multiple platforms (phone, email, Twitter and live blogging). The program host and guests regularly talk during the session with Tallahassee experts about policy, positions and trending bills as part of its weekly hour-long program.

The program previewed the special session noting the federal government offered Florida \$1 billion for the Low Income Pool, a program that funds health care costs for the uninsured. With ten days left before the special legislative session began, it asked is the federal offer enough to relieve the tension in Tallahassee [between the House and Senate](#).

Program topics also included Gov. Rick Scott's [plan to sue the Obama administration](#) on grounds that in his administration's opinion, the feds were trying to force Florida into Medicaid expansion. Scott signed a bill that [reduced testing for public school students](#), and legislators voted to repeal the state gay adoption ban - all were part of the discussion on The Florida Roundup.

Billions of dollars were on the line in the dual debates in the legislature over Medicaid and Amendment 1 (Amendment 1 addresses spending to conserve more land for conservation). The two debates aren't linked except for the disagreement between Republicans, who control both houses. At issue: how much money to spend on the health of Floridians and spending on Florida's environment. WLRN also reported where the Amendment 1 money went, a policy choice that resulted in a lawsuit by environmental groups.

WLRN recalled for listeners the information that 850,000 fellow Floridians find themselves in a gap relating to medical insurance coverage and reported Florida's GOP-controlled state legislature continued to reject an expanded Medicaid program. No additional money went toward those that live in the healthcare gap created by the national Affordable Care Act.

A renewed focus on civil rights, discrimination and wage inequality continued to play out on different fronts. TFR discussed Miami-Dade County's proposal to issue a [\\$100 civil citation for possession of 20 grams or less of marijuana](#). The plan is part of a broader one to curb arrests in low-income areas as well as allowing for police to prioritize their patrolling. Miami Beach's Commission took up a similar measure.

The show also visited the state of [affordable housing](#) in Miami: More than a third

of the population is spending more than half of their income on housing, according to a New York University study. Some experts worry that this will contribute to brain drain in South Florida, which is one of the most expensive places to live in America.

TFR's shows also included a look at the four Floridians now running for the highest office in the land. Spring announcements by Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio were supplemented by their comments about Cuba policy and WLRN analysis of the Hispanic vote and the money factor - where it's coming from and how will it be spent in Florida.

SPECIAL REPORTS & EVENTS

WLRN partnered with The Miami Herald to provide both an in depth look at the healthcare gap and also an investigative series focused on today's money laundering activities and the connection to South Florida businesses. A special report on the latter topic will air in the third quarter of 2015.

Each April marks the National Poetry month and WLRN again partnered with O, Miami promoting a community poetry outpouring based on [odes to your ZIP code](#). The contest drew more than a thousand participants - more than twice the previous year's participation level. The contest concluded with an standing room only evening awards and reading event at Viscaya, the historic mansion and Miami Dade County park.

Special events also included a June evening with noted writer and Key West resident Judy Blume. Co-sponsored by the independent bookstore Books & Books, WLRN's Alicia Zuckerman interviewed the prolific writer (again at a standing room only event) at Coral Gables' Temple Judea. The printing and release of Blume's newest book prompted the occasion, which also drew families of individuals linked to the plane crashes around which her book was based.

Last year, Zuckerman produced an award-winning feature and audio tour of Blume's Miami Beach childhood and interviewed her at the annual Miami Book Fair International, a literary and community event that attracted more than one of the real characters on which one of her most popular children's books was based.