

Chamber set to tackle economy, education planning

At a goals conference Saturday, Bruce Jay Colan became chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce for the year ahead. In these excerpts from his remarks, he sets out initiatives for the chamber.

I am pleased to announce the creation of a chamber task force to help Miami businesses recover and prosper. Our task force will be led by chamber Chair-Elect Maria Alonso. Leadership will include, former chamber Chair Jack Lowell, **Bruce Jay Colan**, First Vice Chair Penny Shaffer, Christine Barney and Basil Bernard.



Bruce Jay Colan

Our task force will partner with efforts of the county, City of Miami, Beacon Council, [Greater Miami] Convention & Visitors Bureau, American Airlines and others.

We are in full support of our new superintendent of schools and we continue to pledge our efforts to improve the graduation rate and build a stronger educational system to foster an improved workforce.

But the school system is not the answer by itself. Thus, we will continue work on the Educational Strategic Plan. Our goal is to have a complete plan for students from pre-kindergarten through post-graduate education. It is the only way Miami can compete in the global community.

One major economic opportunity for Miami business, indeed, perhaps one of the best opportunities at any time in our history, will arise when, whether tomorrow, next month or in the coming year or years, the US embargo on Cuba is lifted.

Today, the chamber issues our new, updated report, "The Business Impact of a Post-Embargo Cuba."

The chamber's original Cuba report was issued at the 1991 goals conference. It was the first such report issued by any chamber in the country. Unlike the prior chamber reports that dealt with the impact of a free Cuba, our new report is focused on the impact of the lifting of the embargo, irrespective of whether and to what extent there is political change in Cuba.

In making this change, I want to be very clear. The chamber is not, and will

not, take a position on whether the embargo should be lifted. That decision is a political decision and will be made by the federal government.

On the other hand, what the chamber cannot do is ignore the opportunities that will arrive with the lifting of the embargo while other communities are now preparing. If Miami is not ready, the opportunities will go elsewhere.

We will be working with the City of Miami, the [Downtown Development Authority] and the county to help transform the working and living environment of downtown Miami from that which was sufficient for the downtown core of a large suburban county – which is what downtown Miami had been – to that which is appropriate for a vertical city, which is what downtown Miami is becoming.

The traffic in downtown Miami is simply unacceptable. Everyone is burdened by the costs incurred by the time it takes to get around downtown. We will continue our discussions with our public officials to review, assess and counsel on traffic infrastructure and enforcement.