Constituent Service Report
2014-2015
Fighting for Florida
MARCO RUBIO
Dear Friends,

Since I was elected in November 2010, one of my highest priorities has been ensuring that my staff and I are available to help constituents with whatever federal assistance they may need. In addition to our phone and email services, we have eight offices throughout Florida to ensure that every constituent who wishes to see us in person can do so conveniently. We also host “Mobile Office Hours” every month throughout the state, where we bring our office and staff to you.

Last year we held our 500th Mobile Office Hour event on July 10th, 2014. We celebrated the occasion by issuing a report highlighting the many people we have helped and cases we have worked on over the years. The report contained in these pages accounts for the thousands of cases we have resolved since then. I am proud that we can continue to make a real difference in the lives of so many Floridians.

My office has assisted people with a wide range of issues. We have helped veterans receive their well-deserved benefits after a lifetime of duty and service to our country. We have helped understandably frustrated people resolve tax issues with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). We have helped senior citizens get their earned Medicare payments. We have helped U.S. citizens and those wishing to become citizens work with the Department of State as well as the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In each of these cases, we helped the people of Florida and their families overcome bureaucratic hurdles to receive the care and attention from Washington that they deserve.

My staff and I stand ready to help you regardless of the issue. We know how important these federal services are, and we do our very best to resolve every issue brought before us. Sometimes it can be a health care-related matter of life and death, and other times it makes the difference between paying your bills on time or falling into debt.

This part of my service to Florida is personal to me. My parents’ American Dream began in 1956 when they were approved for admission to the United States as legal permanent residents. Today, thousands of people like them come to our offices because they or their loved ones are facing challenges involving our broken immigration system. Some matters simply cannot be resolved without legislative solutions, but many can be through the dedication of our constituent service team.

As you read this report and the stories of fellow Floridians, you will see what a difference constituent services can make. It is our hope that other residents facing similar problems will turn to us and our congressional colleagues for assistance. After all, that is why we are here – to fight for Florida.

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio

www.rubio.senate.gov

CONSTITUENT CASEWORK ........................................... 4
By The Numbers .......................................................... 4

MOBILE OFFICE HOURS ........................................... 5
Where have we been this year? ...................................... 5
Who have we helped this year? ...................................... 6

SUCCESS STORIES .................................................. 7
Immigration and International Issues .............................. 8
Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits .................................... 10
Social Security and Medicare .................................... 12
Taxes .................................................................... 14

UNFORGETTABLE CASES .......................................... 15

CLOSING NOTE ....................................................... 18

Senator Rubio and his staff want to thank the representatives of the federal agencies as well as the state leaders who have worked with us over the past five years to help our constituents resolve their issues. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the various city and county governments, local chambers of commerce, community centers, organizations and universities that have partnered with us to make Mobile Office Hours possible. Thank you for opening your doors and helping us to serve our constituents together.
CONSTITUENT CASEWORK
By The Numbers

From January 2011, when Senator Rubio was sworn into office, to December 2, 2015, the office has received 31,024 requests for assistance from his constituents. Over 29,429 of those requests have been completed or closed. Since July 10, 2014, when the office celebrated its 500th Mobile Office Hour event by producing the first Constituent Service Report, the office has received 8,672 new cases and 11,032 additional cases have been completed.

The top issue areas requested for help by Florida constituents are:

- Immigration and International Issues
- Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits
- Social Security and Medicare
- Taxes
MOBILE OFFICE HOURS

Where have we been this year?

Each week, Senator Rubio brings his office to you. His staff travels throughout the state of Florida to meet with constituents and assist them with federal issues in their own communities. For constituents who can’t visit the regional offices, these “Mobile Office Hours” offer a more convenient way to seek federal casework assistance.
Who have we helped this year?

Since our 500th Mobile Office Hour event on July 10, 2014, 10,813 people have visited our office during Mobile Office Hours. We have hosted 540 Mobile Office Hour events, totaling 1,040 since the Senator was sworn into office.
SUCCESS STORIES

Behind the scenes are real stories of real people who were helped. For privacy reasons, full names are not provided.
Immigration and International Issues

Carmel called Senator Rubio's office from an airport in Germany when the airline would not let her board. Germany requires that each passport have at least six months left of validity and Carmel's passport was one day short. A caseworker contacted the Miami Passport Agency and worked to get Carmel an appointment so that she could apply for a new passport before her rescheduled flight. She picked up her passport at 3:30pm the day she was flying and was in her seat by 5pm.

Paolo's mother in Colombia had been denied a visitor visa to attend her daughter's wedding in Naples. Senator Rubio's staff contacted the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, Colombia, and advised them of the mother's prior U.S. visas and ties to Colombia. The Embassy issued Paolo's mother a visa just in time for her to attend the wedding and watch her daughter say “I do.”

Jean, a constituent from Hialeah, needed a kidney donation, and his cousin in Cuba volunteered to be tested to see if he was a match. However, the U.S. Interests Section (USINT) in Havana denied the cousin a visa to come to the U.S. for testing. A member of our staff provided the USINT with a letter from the University of Miami advising them that the cousin needed to be tested and asking them to reconsider their previous denial. The USINT issued Jean's cousin a visa so that he was finally able to travel to the U.S. from Cuba for testing.

Jean, a constituent from Hialeah, needed a kidney donation, and his cousin in Cuba volunteered to be tested to see if he was a match.

Thank you note from a constituent

Peter, from Florida's Treasure Coast, contacted the Senator's office in December of 2014 looking for assistance in getting his son's remains from abroad. His son had died in a diving accident, and the local police weren't cooperating with the release of the body to the funeral agency. A caseworker reached out to both the State Department and the consulate, and confirmed that the agencies were assisting the family. Then the caseworker contacted the pathology director at the police department and was told they would do everything they could to release the remains within a week. Peter received his son's remains within four days of calling the Senator's office and was finally able to lay him to rest.

Gerald, a resident of Parrish, contacted Senator Rubio's office with an urgent passport issue. He was going on a scheduled trip in seven days and was still waiting for his passport to be processed. When he applied months before, he was asked to provide additional evidence and he sent it right away. Our office contacted the agency, sent them copies of Gerald's supporting documents, and asked that his case be expedited. His
passport was processed, approved and mailed via overnight delivery within 24 hours.

In November 2014, a constituent from Bartow contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance with his immigration status. When he went to apply for Social Security benefits, he was asked to provide proof of legal status. Although he was a legal resident through his mother, he never had his status confirmed with documentation. He had been brought to the U.S. from Europe by his parents when he was just a small child. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and provided supporting documentation for him, including the vessel’s manifest showing when his family arrived and a copy of his mother’s naturalization certificate. The USCIS was able to locate his mother’s A file, and he was issued a residency card. The constituent can now apply for citizenship and is eligible to receive Social Security benefits with a green card.

A Major League Baseball player contacted the Senator’s office when he was stuck in the Dominican Republic. He lost his residency card and the airline wouldn’t let him travel back to the U.S. with just a copy and his passport. Rubio’s staff suggested he go online and get an appointment at the U.S. Consulate so he could get a travel letter. A caseworker then sent both the USCIS and the State Department a copy of his passport and his residency card. The Consulate hand-delivered his travel letter and he was able to fly home.

A constituent from Orlando contacted Senator Rubio’s office requesting assistance with a pending work authorization. She had been offered an Optional Practical Training (OPT) position and her application had been pending for more than 90 days. A caseworker contacted the USCIS and requested expedited processing of her claim. It was successfully approved and she received her work authorization just in time to start work.

Patrick, from Daytona Beach, contacted Senator Rubio’s staff requesting assistance with his daughter’s derived citizenship because she had been denied the benefit. She was born in the Philippines, but never had her birth registered at the Consulate where
the family was living. Patrick had to provide documentation that proved he had resided in the United States a stipulated number of years before his daughter's birth. A caseworker contacted the American Citizen Services (ACS) at the Embassy in the Philippines to get a list of the documents Patrick needed to present in order for the previous decision to be reviewed. Senator Rubio's staff assisted Patrick with gathering information from Census records to help him prove his U.S. residency. The caseworker also suggested he get copies of his father’s military stations. After all documents were received and the DNA test was complete, Patrick’s daughter was granted citizenship and issued her U.S. passport.

Ryan, a resident of Orlando, lost his passport while in New York City and was traveling to Scotland the following day. When he contacted Senator Rubio's staff for assistance, a caseworker advised him to immediately go to the New York City Passport Agency to get a new passport. The caseworker called the agency and notified them of Ryan’s predicament. He was issued a passport that same day.

Linda contacted the office requesting assistance with her husband’s pending immigrant visa. He filed a waiver of inadmissibility, which had been approved months ago, but never received a call from the Consulate in Tegucigalpa to schedule a new interview. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the Consulate on behalf of Linda and her husband and the visa was approved.

Miguel, from Davie, needed a passport to travel for work, but was notified by the National Passport Center (NPC) that his naturalization certificate was missing a signature and a stamp. The agency gave him 90 days to obtain a corrected certificate. He filed an N-565 with the USCIS to correct the certificate, but didn’t receive it within the 90-day period. The NPC denied his passport application and told him to reapply. Rubio’s staff asked the USCIS to expedite Miguel’s certificate because of the agency’s error and they agreed. Then a caseworker asked the NPC to reopen the application and extend Miguel some time to get the certificate corrected, due to the USCIS’s mistake. The NPC approved Miguel’s passport and issued a 10-year validity passport book.

Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits

John contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance with an appeal for increased disability compensation benefits. He submitted the appeal when he was living in Boston, but had since moved to Perry, FL. A caseworker contacted the VA Regional Office (VARO) in Boston on John’s behalf. His overall disability rating had been increased to 90% and he was sent a retroactive award of $3,946.72.

Virginia, a constituent from Fort Lauderdale and the widow of a veteran, applied for Aid and Attendance in September 2014. When she was enduring significant financial hardship, her family reached out to Senator Rubio’s staff for help. A caseworker contacted the VA and requested expedited processing of Virginia’s claim. With the office’s help, she was awarded approximately $22,000.00 in benefit payments.

Franklin required oxygen services, but the nearest VA facility that could provide them was in Gainesville, more than 60 miles from his home in The Villages. He did not qualify for the

Thank you note from a constituent
Veterans Choice Program (VCP) because his residence was less than 40 miles from another VA facility. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Gainesville, and after a review of Franklin’s records by a primary care physician, he was deemed a candidate for the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) “GAP” program. The program will provide in-home oxygen renewal evaluations and eliminate the need for him to travel from The Villages to the VA in Gainesville for his oxygen needs.

William, a veteran from Viera, contacted Senator Rubio’s staff asking for help getting his lost Good Conduct Medal replaced. A caseworker submitted an inquiry to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) and was able to successfully get him a replacement. The caseworker also asked that William’s record be reviewed for additional awards. It was found that William should have been given, and was later awarded, the National Defense Service Medal for serving honorably in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War.

A veteran from Boynton Beach contacted Senator Rubio’s office in October 2014 requesting assistance in getting retroactive payment on his VA benefits. A member of Rubio’s team contacted the VA to see if this could happen. Even though he was still in the fiduciary program, the VA put the veteran back in charge of his VA disability payment. As a result, the VA released $18,888.00 into his account.

Tiffany needed help expediting the processing of her Notice of Disagreement (NOD) to the VA due to financial hardship. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff sent Tiffany’s eviction notice to the VA regional office. They made a favorable decision that awarded her permanent and total disability status, individual unemployability, dependents’ education benefits, and a $49,852.36 retroactive benefit payment.

John, a veteran from Land O’ Lakes, was told by the VA in 2009 that he did not qualify to receive health care because his income exceeded the threshold. Five years later, he contacted Senator Rubio’s staff for assistance with the issue. As a result of the caseworker’s inquiry, the VA reviewed John’s military records a second time. It was discovered that he was, in fact, eligible to receive VA health care, due to his service at Camp Lejeune, and was issued a Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC).

Eduardo, a resident of Orlando, contacted Senator Rubio’s office requesting help with his dependency claim with the VA. He wanted to add his spouse to his award. A caseworker contacted the VA with Eduardo’s request and successfully got his spouse added to the award. As a result of the VA’s decision, Eduardo received a retroactive payment of $3,826.74.

A constituent from Newberry, who is the widow of a veteran, contacted Senator Rubio’s staff for assistance in having her Appeal to Board of Veterans’ Appeals (VA Form 9) sent to the VARO in Philadelphia. It needed to meet the VA’s Form 9 deadline of receipt within 60 days. She had already completed a Form 9 with a Disabled American Veterans (DAV) National Service Officer but it was not showing up in the VA’s computer database, despite the officer saying it was sent. She completed a new Form 9 and a Rubio caseworker sent it to the Philadelphia office on her behalf within the 60-day window.

Thank you note from a constituent
Peter contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance in getting the VA to resume his disability payments. He stopped receiving them when his bank was bought by another bank and his account number had changed. Additionally, the original benefits had been issued by the VARO in California, and Peter was now living in Florida. A caseworker sent an inquiry to the VA St. Petersburg Regional Benefit Office and the veteran’s monthly benefit payment of $1,991.71 was reinstated. A Retired Pay Adjustment was also done based on Peter’s eligibility to receive military retired pay. The VA sent him a $25,434.92 retroactive payment for both the retired pay adjustment and the monthly benefits it owed him.

Alfred had an appeal pending at a VA regional office and was having trouble getting an appointment with his primary care provider. Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the West Palm Beach VAMC Congressional Liaison while the vet was still at the hospital, and helped get Alfred an appointment within a week.

William contacted Senator Rubio’s staff after the VA finalized its decision to decrease the veteran’s disability compensation for migraine headaches and terminate his Individual Unemployability benefits. As a result, William would lose $2,000.00 a month. A caseworker sent the VA additional evidence that had not been previously reviewed as part of the decision in a formal request for reconsideration. Less than a week later, the VA restored William’s previous disability rating and an approximate $3,200.00 benefit payment.

Social Security and Medicare

Patricia contacted Senator Rubio’s office because she had been denied disability, despite having many medical conditions including stenosis of the spinal canal, stroke and frontal scalp hematoma. A caseworker sent an inquiry to the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) and worked with Patricia to find new evidence for a potential hearing. The caseworker was successfully able to get her an expedited hearing within a month of the initial inquiry and Patricia was granted her disability.

Carolyn needed assistance with a local health care company that was billing Medicare for her husband’s oxygen supply. The company believed that the services were not rendered. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to try and resolve the issue. The caseworker learned that the company had been experiencing a system error saying that the portable oxygen hadn’t been received by Carolyn’s husband. The company agreed to submit a voluntary refund to Medicare and Tricare for its error.

Claude’s wife came to Senator Rubio’s office very frustrated with SSA. They had mixed up the dates of his Medicare coverage and left a gap for months showing that he had not paid his premium. Now his bill was $43,000.00 and Medicare threatened to terminate his coverage if...
the bill wasn’t paid. A caseworker contacted both SSA and CMS to find out what had happened. She learned that staff at the payment center had already taken action to correct Claude’s Medicare Part A and all benefits were paid under his wife’s Social Security Number (SSN). Claude would receive a new Medicare card with the correct Part A and B dates within 30 days.

Tina contacted Senator Rubio’s staff in July 2015 because she needed help getting her retroactive payment from SSA. A caseworker submitted an inquiry to the agency and received a favorable response one week later stating that Tina would receive a payment for $3,532.00.

A constituent was receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, but the amount was partially reduced toward the end of the year because she started working part-time. When she lost the job, she informed Social Security of the employment separation and requested that her full benefits be restored. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted her local Social Security office because she had never heard back. As a result, she began receiving the full amount of SSI again and was compensated for the months she was unemployed.

Janice, a homeless woman in Florida, wanted an expedited response to her Social Security Disability (SSD) claim. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff made an inquiry on her behalf and received a favorable response five days later. Janice was entitled to disability benefits and would receive $1,113.60 on the second Wednesday of each month.

A constituent contacted Senator Rubio’s office in March 2015. He had been in a car accident and injured his vertebrae. He filed for disability that same month, but needed the payments as soon as possible because of his health restrictions and financial situation. A caseworker sent an inquiry to SSA and received a favorable response one month later stating that the constituent was entitled to disability benefits.

A constituent needed an expedited SSN and contacted the Senator’s office for help. A caseworker contacted SSA and was told that her documents required additional verification by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the information had been verified, and the application for a new SSN had been cleared. She would be assigned a new number the next day and her card would be mailed to her home.

Christina, a constituent of Miami Springs, reached out to Senator Rubio’s staff for help with her retirement claim. A caseworker contacted SSA and received a favorable response. Christina would get a retroactive payment of $1,406.00 and monthly recurring annuity of $2,528.00.

Anna reached out to Senator Rubio’s staff in April 2015. She needed to see a cardiologist and had gotten married, so she wanted to change her name through Medicare. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted CMS to explain Anna’s urgent situation. The agency said her name had to be changed through SSA before it could be updated through CMS. After contacting SSA, the caseworker learned that Anna’s name had been properly updated and there was a miscommunication between the two agencies.
The caseworker sent SSA’s response to CMS and Anna’s name was corrected right away.

Majorie was supposed to receive a check from SSA on February 3, 2015, and reached out to Senator Rubio’s office for help on April 27 when it still hadn’t arrived. After a caseworker contacted the agency, she was notified that the local Social Security office had issued Majorie a critical payment to replace the original one that hadn’t been received. A fraud block was placed on Majorie’s account so that any future changes to her record would only be made by her in person.

**Taxes**

In May 2015, Joseph and his wife contacted Senator Rubio’s office for help. They were experiencing a delay with the processing of their income tax refund because someone had used their Social Security Numbers (SSN) to fraudulently obtain an income tax return in their name. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) explained to the couple that their issue would take six months to correct. After a caseworker contacted the IRS on the couple’s behalf, they received their $7,042.10 refund in half the initial time.

In June 2015, Sharon contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance. She had an identity theft issue that was delaying the processing of her income tax return. Sharon had tried to contact the IRS herself several times, but was unsuccessful in resolving her ongoing tax issue. A caseworker contacted the IRS on Sharon’s behalf and helped her to receive her $990.90 refund one month later.

Jacquelyn, a constituent from Fort Myers, asked Senator Rubio’s office for help in June 2015 when her income tax refund had been delayed because someone was fraudulently using her SSN. A member of Rubio’s staff worked with Jacquelyn and the IRS to get her $9,870.00 refund two months later.

Richard, a constituent from Lithia, contacted Senator Rubio’s office regarding a delay in the processing of his income tax refund. A caseworker contacted the IRS and found out that someone had used Richard’s SSN to process a fraudulent income tax return. When the IRS received Richard’s return, his account was flagged. Richard’s income tax return was then corrected and he received a $1,740.80 refund.

A constituent from Boca Raton needed assistance with a problem he was having with the IRS. The agency had previously told him that he would not receive his federal tax return for six months due to a random check for identity theft. A caseworker successfully reached out to the IRS and was able to get the constituent his $3,204.00 refund in less than three months.
The parents of journalist Steven Sotloff contacted Senator Rubio’s office after their son was kidnapped in Syria in August 2013. Rubio’s staff worked with Steven’s parents, Arthur and Shirley, to try to get information about his whereabouts from various U.S. government agencies, and the Senator spoke personally with Steven’s family. In conjunction with other Senators who represented the families of several Americans kidnapped by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Rubio tried to encourage the Obama Administration to provide whatever information it had about the location of these Americans and efforts being taken to secure their release. Sadly, Steven was killed by his captors in September 2014.

Arthur and Shirley Sotloff invited Senator Rubio to speak at Steven’s memorial service. At the service, Rubio said that Steven “chose not to just be a journalist but one to report where horrible things happen. It was to bring to us stories about the people who were suffering unbelievable acts. Evil is still here. It has a different name but it’s still here, and he unmasked it.” Because of the frustrations experienced by families of kidnapped Americans like the Sotloffs, since Steven’s death, Senator Rubio has supported efforts to improve the U.S. government’s response to Americans held overseas and how their families are treated.

On March 31, 2014, Sgt. Andrew Tahmooressi, a U.S. Marine from South Florida, crossed the Mexican border with three personal firearms. He had served two tours of duty in Afghanistan and suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Sgt. Tahmooressi was jailed on weapons charges and sat in a Mexican jail for 214 days. His mother, Jill, reached out to Senator Rubio’s office during that time to see if there was anything the Senator could do to help free her son. Staff immediately contacted the Department of State to get information and Senator Rubio asked Secretary of State John Kerry to make it a priority in their
communications with the Mexican government. He also urged the White House to use its diplomatic influence to show the importance of the matter. Additionally, Rubio wrote a letter to the Mexican Government to highlight Sgt. Tahmooressi’s case.

“It’s time for the Obama Administration to wake up and advocate for his return home,” said Rubio. “The Obama Administration’s virtual silence and inaction on Sgt. Tahmooressi’s case has been beyond troubling. It’s sheer indifference. The Obama Administration needs to step up our diplomatic efforts to bring this Marine home.”

Senator Rubio’s office stayed in contact with the Department of State and Ms. Tahmoreressi until a Mexican judge ordered Sgt. Tahmooressi’s immediate release on October 31, 2014.

“It’s been a long ordeal for Sgt. Tahmooressi and his family, but I’m relieved that he is finally being freed and that their nightmare is coming to an end,” Rubio said when Tahmooressi was released. “It’s been our honor to work on his and his family’s behalf to help bring him home.”
I want to thank the people of Florida for the honor and privilege of serving in the U.S. Senate. I am truly blessed with the opportunity to work on your behalf.

As thousands of Floridians can attest, the stories outlined in this report, and many more that our office has been involved with, would not be possible without our dedicated constituent service team. These Floridians work tirelessly day in and day out to help others throughout the state. They help ensure that our safety net is there to catch the fallen and help them back on their feet. They help veterans get the assistance they need and the benefits they deserve after their work and service to our country. They make sure the federal government does not stand in the way of people realizing their own American Dreams.

These staff members have various backgrounds and talents that make our office and community stronger. We have individuals who are fluent in multiple languages, allowing us to serve most people throughout the state without language being a barrier. We have younger staffers who are experiencing the satisfaction of public service for the very first time, and more experienced staffers who still feel a sense of reward thousands of cases later. Our constituent service representatives are leaders in the community and civic organizations. They are mothers and fathers, daughters and sons. One is a veteran who is now serving her fellow veterans, and another is a lawyer who is using her legal knowledge and skill to aid our constituents.

They have helped open our eyes to the problems inherent in the federal bureaucracy, and most importantly, helped our office touch thousands of lives over the past five years.

Thank you,

Marco

Fighting for Florida

Marco Rubio