U.S. Senator Marco Rubio and his office celebrate 500 Mobile Office Hours

And the lives impacted through constituent service
Since I was elected in November 2010, my biggest priority 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 opened eight offices throughout Florida to ensure that no constituent that wishes to see us in person has to drive more than two-and-a-half hours to do so. However, we also recognized that not everyone has the means to drive to us, which is why we initiated a “Mobile Office Hours” program, which has brought our office to every county of our state.

Now, more than halfway through my term and on the occasion of our 500th Mobile Office Hours event, I am most proud of knowing that we’ve made a real difference in the lives of many. This report contains some of these stories, which mostly go unnoticed and get little fanfare, but actually make a big difference – one case at a time.

Altogether, we have assisted people with a wide range of issues involving federal government services and benefits, including Social Security, Veterans Affairs, IRS tax issues, Medicare and visa issues, among many others.

It is through these cases that we are constantly reminded of how the federal government impacts people’s ability to achieve the American Dream. For instance, when people’s tax refunds are delayed, this strains their family budgets. If they’re delayed as a result of a scam or identity theft, we need to make sure that victims’ records are cleaned up and that the criminals are brought to justice.

Regardless of the issue, my staff and I know how much people rely on these types of services. It’s why we treat every case as if it’s the difference between paying your bills on time or falling further into debt. Or even as a matter of life and death. Because sometimes, that’s exactly what it’s about.

My parents’ American Dream began in 1956 when their visas were approved to come to the United States. Today, thousands of people like them come to our office because they or their loved ones are facing myriad challenges involving our broken immigration system. Some matters simply cannot be resolved without legislative solutions. But many can be resolved with experienced help. And as you’ll read in this report, getting a visa or passport application expedited can make a real difference in many ways.

In highlighting our efforts in all these areas of constituent service, it is our hope that other Floridians who face similar problems will turn to us – and our congressional colleagues – for assistance. That is what we are here for – we are here to serve you.

Sincerely,

Marco Rubio
Senator Rubio and his staff want to thank the representatives of the federal and state agencies who have worked with us over the past three-and-a-half years to help our constituents resolve their issues. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all the various city and county governments, local chambers of commerce, community centers, organizations and universities that we have partnered with over the years to make these first 500 Mobile Office Hours possible. Thank you for opening the doors to your facilities and helping us serve our constituents together.
CONSTITUENT CASEWORK

By The Numbers

Since Senator Rubio was sworn into office in January 2011, his office has received 22,129 requests for assistance from his constituents. Over 19,216 of those requests have been resolved.

Senator Rubio’s staff works on the average case for 82 days to bring the case to resolution.

The top 5 issue areas requested for help by Florida constituents are:

- Immigration
- Veterans Affairs Benefits
- State issues such as Medicaid
- Social Security
- Taxes
MOBILE OFFICE HOURS

What are Mobile Office Hours?

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.

Statistics

July 10, 2014 marks the 500th Mobile Office Hours outreach event held by Senator Rubio’s staff throughout Florida. Over 2,150 Floridians have visited with the Senator’s office at these events.
Office of United States Senator Marco Rubio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michelle Fishburne
Public Information Officer
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TAMPA, Fla. (Dec. 9, 2011) – U.S. Senator Marco Rubio will conduct public events in Citrus County on Wednesday, December 14. Senator Rubio will also be meeting with local leaders in Hernando County.

Senator Rubio will host a public meeting at the Citrus County Commission Chambers in Inverness on Wednesday, December 14 at 4:00 p.m. The meeting will begin with a presentation by Senator Rubio followed by questions and answers from the public. Senator Rubio is looking to talk with local residents and meet with constituents.

Senator Rubio will meet with local leaders in Hernando County on Wednesday, December 14 at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will be held at 1201 W. Main Street in Brooksville, Hernando County. The meeting will include conversations with government officials to address the needs of Hernando County residents.

Senator Rubio has held several town hall meetings with constituents in the past and this will be an opportunity to continue these open discussions about the issues that are important to the people of Florida.

For more information, please contact Michelle Fishburne at 727-201-9950 or mfishburne@mikereagan.com.

Office of United States Senator Marco Rubio

For more information, visit Senator Rubio’s website at www.mikereagan.com.
Behind The Scenes Are Real Stories Of Real People Being Helped

Note: Due to privacy reasons, full names are not provided below.

Immigration

Elisha Dawkins is a veteran that resides in North Florida. He applied for citizenship but his application was delayed pending additional information from the Navy. He contacted Senator Rubio for assistance, and a member of the staff contacted the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and the Navy. After the required documentation was submitted, his application was approved.

As told in the Miami Herald:

“He went from risking his life for this country and being honorably discharged twice to being criminally prosecuted and thrown in jail for almost three months in 2011 by the government he served.

…”

“I am so grateful for the many people who stood by me and believed in me,’ he added, listing, among many others, U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Miami, and U.S. Sens. Bill Nelson, a Democrat, and Marco Rubio, a Republican, and their staffs, as important players in getting a positive resolution to his case.”

###

In August 2011, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Okaloosa County constituent Adam. Adam had been trying to get immigration forms for his fiancée through USCIS for about 6 months. He contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance, and within two weeks, Rubio’s staff was able to streamline the process and get Adam’s fiancée’s paperwork approved by USCIS.

###

In October 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff assisted Charles, a resident of Central Florida and a member of the armed services who was scheduled to deploy overseas. Charles contacted the Senator’s office because his fiancée resided in Germany, and he wanted her to come to the U.S. so they could get married before he deployed. A member of the staff reached out to the USCIS office, which accepted the request to expedite Charles’ petition for his fiancée’s visa. The office approved Charles’ petition and forwarded it to the consulate, where they issued his fiancée’s visa prior to his deployment.

###

Luis was the victim of immigration identity theft. Someone had stolen his account number and his name, and that person had already been deported. Unable to prove his
identity, Luis was placed under deportation orders. Senator Rubio’s staff requested that officials examine the fingerprints in the ICE file and compare with the constituent’s prints – and those in his original file. Luis was cleared and granted his residency, and his case was closed in December 2013.

###

USCIS in Kendall had denied Osmany’s application for legal permanent residency because he didn’t have proof of legal entry. After Senator Rubio’s office contacted Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Washington, DC, they confirmed that Osmany had been inspected at a land port of entry. A caseworker forwarded CBP’s response to USCIS Kendall and they were able to verify that indeed Osmany was inspected upon entry and the case was re-opened. His application was approved and he was issued a Permanent Resident Card.

###

In late August 2013, the director of a Christian school in Central Florida contacted Senator Rubio because some students accepted for admission were denied their visas by the U.S. Consulate in their home countries. The school is certified by the Department of Homeland Security for international students, and this was the first problem they encountered with the program. A member of the staff contacted the U.S. State Department and was informed that they required additional documentation to certify the students were not “intending” immigrants. The applicants resubmitted their information with additional proof that all of the students had valid tourist visas and previously traveled to Florida many times. Based on that and other certifying information, the consulate issued the students’ visas required to attend school in Florida.

###

In January 2014, Senator Rubio read the Tampa Tribune story of Lazaro, a Cuban man who came to Tampa in 2007 with his wife and two daughters as a political refugee. Though he had a bachelor’s degree and taught machinery construction in his native country, could find only manual work here. Lazaro landed in a place he now calls his second home, the Tampa Bay Christian Academy. Staff and students there adopted Lazaro as their own, embracing his strong work ethic, his constant smile and his willingness to help out wherever he was needed. They also encouraged his efforts to learn English and study for the citizenship test. On the day he went to take his oath with 49 fellow immigrants, nearly two dozen youth and adults from the school surprised him at the ceremony with homemade banners, cards and flags. Senator Rubio was touched by this expression of love.

To commemorate Lazaro becoming a citizen and the support the school gave him, Senator Rubio's staff delivered an American flag to the school that was flown above the Capitol Building on Jan. 7 — the same day Lazaro officially became an American.
Students hold the American flag given to the school by Senator Rubio to honor the citizenship of school maintenance director Lazaro Escobio. Read the full Tampa Tribune story [here](#). Photo Credit: Jim Reed and the Tampa Tribune.

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**Veterans Affairs Benefits**

Keith, contacted the office on behalf of his mother for help getting the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to approve pension and Aid and Attendance benefits in 2012. There were issues regarding the reporting of his mother’s net worth to the VA and others. She had originally applied for the benefit in 2011. She was finally awarded benefits in a September 30, 2013 decision, but her $26,370.00 retroactive payment bounced back to the VA in October 2013 when it was transmitted to her bank based on banking information the VA said it received from the widow. After providing the banking information to her son and his mother’s bank manager, they said the account and routing information the VA had on file was incorrect. New information was sent to the VA in late October 2013. When the office was told it would not be processed until January 2014, a staff member spoke with a congressional liaison who said she could manually process the payment. After doing so, the money was deposited in the widow’s account on November 10, 2013.

###

Blair, a veteran’s wife, requested assistance on behalf of her husband, 86, who has dementia and other health issues. He was appealing the VA’s denial of Individual Unemployability (IU), and his case had been sent back and forth between various offices six times due to lack of an adequate medical opinion. Senator Rubio’s staff made inquiries to the VA. After a favorable decision, our office requested the VA get his retroactive payment processed quickly. He received $116,000.00 in retroactive IU payments for payments due from October 2008.

###
Tamera contacted the office in August 2013 regarding an appeal with the VA. She originally filed a disability claim stating her health had deteriorated so badly that she could not work. In fact, she spent about 75% of her time in bed due to terrible migraines. As a result of our initial inquiry, the VA overturned their previous denial and deemed her eligible to receive educational assistance through Vocational Rehabilitation. On December 2013, the VA deposited a retroactive check in the amount of $59,518.00 in her bank account. In addition, she is in receipt of a monthly disability payment of $1,483.00.

###

Jarrod submitted an inquiry to our office regarding a pending VA disability claim for his left ankle, left foot, arthritis, lower back, degenerative joint disease and bilateral knees. Jarrod initially filed the claim with the VA in January 2012. Finally, in October 2013, VA officials approved his claim and sent him a retroactive check in the amount of $41,235.00. In addition, they notified him that he would begin receiving a monthly pension check in the amount of $1,335.00.

###

Anibal contacted the office in early August 2013 requesting retroactive pay on his VA disability compensation. A staff member sent an inquiry to the VA on August 3rd. As a result, VA officials determined that he was entitled to a retroactive Concurrent Retirement Disability Pay (CRDP) check in the amount of $29,721.00. This check was deposited in his account on August 12th.

###

Jane is a permanently disabled veteran residing on the Gulf Coast. In April 2012, she contacted the senator’s office because she was in a great deal of pain due to a dental problem. A caseworker contacted the VAMC Tampa Dental Clinic and was told all the emergency slots were filled but she would get a standby appointment for the same day. The caseworker encouraged the veteran to attend and she was subsequently seen on the same day.

###

In April 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to resolve an issue for Gary, a veteran from the Gulf Coast. After receiving notice that his VA payments would be suspended as of April 1, Gary contacted one of the Senator’s regional offices for assistance. A member of the staff reached out to the VA and discovered that Gary needed a Pension Eligibility Verification Report (EVR), which he was able to provide. A copy was forwarded by the office to the VA and his benefits were reinstated.

###
Fred is a disabled veteran that applied for disability assistance from the VA last year. With his hearing loss getting progressively worse, he contacted the Senator’s office for assistance. A member of the staff contacted the VA requesting that his application be expedited due to his deteriorating health. After expedited review, his application was approved. The VA sent him a retroactive check in the amount of $15,422.00. In addition, he received a monthly pension check in the amount of $1,402.00.


###

David, a disabled veteran residing in South Florida, contacted Senator Rubio’s office regarding his pending claim with the VA for increased disability. He recently lost his job due to kidney failure and his claim had been pending for over 15 months. A member of the staff contacted the agency and requested an expedited review of his application due to his dire health condition. Within weeks, VA officials approved his claim and sent him a retroactive check in the amount of $24,103.00. In addition, he received a monthly compensation check in the amount of $3,561.00.


###

In September 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to help Kenneth, a disabled veteran residing in the Florida Panhandle. A few weeks prior, his wife went to their bank to withdraw money in preparation for a possible hurricane. To her surprise, the bank said Kenneth’s veteran’s compensation benefit check was rescinded because the VA had listed him as deceased. Obviously, Kenneth was still very much alive, so the couple called Senator Rubio’s office for assistance, and a member of the staff contacted the VA to resolve the matter. Kenneth’s benefit check was reinstated within a week, but his subsequent monthly benefit continued to be delayed. After additional follow-up by the Senator’s staff, the VA corrected the error and Kenneth received his VA benefits in full.


###

In February 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Laurence, a disabled veteran residing in Lee County. The Coast Guard was threatening to take away his tax-free Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) pay because the service had computed his CRSC percentage incorrectly. The issue needed to be resolved quickly or Laurence would lose his tax-free CRSC status and pay federal taxes on an additional $5,000 a year. The Senator’s staff contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs, which did an expedited review of his application that included supportive documentation for his current medical condition. The agency decided to increase his percentage which, was reported to the Coast Guard Pay Center, and he was able to retain his tax-free CSRC payments.

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State Issues
In August 2013, Senator Rubio’s staff assisted Fernando, an elderly man who resides in South Florida. His adult daughter is disabled and was recently released from an Assisted Living Facility (ALF) and back into Fernando’s care. Her benefits from the Florida Department of Children and Families needed to be transferred but Fernando did not know how to accomplish that, so he visited the Senator’s office for assistance. Because the reinstatement of benefits falls within the purview of the State of Florida, a member of the staff connected Fernando with a representative of SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of the Elderly). The representative was able to walk him through the process and get the application filed as required.

In April 2014, Laura, a resident of Central Florida, met with Senator Rubio’s staff at her local Mobile Office Hours. She shared her concerns about the damaged sidewalk in front of her residence and feared a potential sinkhole was forming in the area. A member of the staff reported her concerns to state and local representatives. In turn, they sent the appropriate authorities to inspect the area. After the investigation was concluded, they confirmed it was not a sinkhole and the sidewalk was repaired.

In October 2011, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for William, a resident of Volusia County, who contacted the Senator’s staff regarding a hazmat classification on his Florida CDL license. He needed approval so that he could acquire a job with UPS. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was in the process of performing the required background check to grant the hazmat classification, which normally takes 4-6 months. Due to the time constraints on his employment offer with UPS, Rubio’s office asked that the agency expedite William’s background check. TSA agreed, and because there were no complications, the hazmat classification was approved two days later. William was able to get his license in the timeframe required, and received the job at UPS.

In April 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a case for Jose and his wife, who are South Florida constituents. Jose’s wife is ill and they needed assistance moving from their low income residence to a place closer to her health care facility. Unsure of the process, he contacted the Senator’s office for assistance. A member of the staff was able to provide him with information for the local public housing agency. After Jose completed the necessary steps, he and his wife were approved for relocation.
Annie’s husband was terminally ill. With the doctor’s approval, he was transported by ambulance to his residence so that his final days would be resting peacefully at home under Hospice care. He passed away in August 2010, but Medicare refused to pay the cost of transportation. Annie filed appeals with no success, so she contacted Senator Rubio for assistance in March 2011. Medicare approved payment of her husband’s ambulance transport claim posthumously in May 2011 when she provided proof that the ambulatory service was medically necessary.

###

Marianne is a Tricare dependent that was left without Medicare Part B coverage in October 2011 based on erroneous information. The Social Security Administration (SSA) reinstated her Part B coverage and waived the penalty when the constituent furnished evidence showing she received misinformation from an SSA representative regarding her decision to delay enrolling in Medicare.

###

Iraida was dealing with Collier County Housing Authority and Palm Beach County Housing Authority, and was having difficulty getting a transfer. In November 2013, she visited Senator Rubio’s office to report that she was given a 60 day voucher but claimed that because of the housing authority’s negligence and untimely assistance, she lost her opportunity and was without a home. The elderly woman even slept in a car one of the times that she travelled to Palm Beach to fill out more documents. This was going on for seven months. After a member of the staff contacted the housing authorities, Iraida’s apartment was ready for move in.

###

Maria came to Senator Rubio’s office in December 2011 extremely frustrated and upset because the modification of the mortgage on her home was complete, and papers were signed and returned to the lender, but the lender stated that they did not have the signed documents, therefore no modification was in place. The lender demanded all the money be paid, or Maria would lose her home. Senator Rubio’s office contacted the lender, and Maria’s modification was reinstated and approved within three months.

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**Social Security**

In June 2014, Sam suffered a heart attack after helping push a stranger’s stalled car off I-4. Senator Rubio’s office was contacted by a family friend on behalf of Sam, who is self-employed and the only wage earner for his family. Swift actions were taken by Senator Rubio’s office to help the family initiate a disability claim. Our office remained in close contact with the family to ensure timely submission of medical records to establish
permanent disability and dire need. The Social Security Administration quickly issued a favorable decision.

###

In March 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Susan, a Central Florida resident whose Social Security Disability benefits exceeded the income threshold for full Medicaid coverage. As a result, Susan was unable to pay for her blood pressure and respiratory prescriptions. A caseworker from Senator Rubio’s office was able to contact the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) for assistance. Representatives from DCF helped get Susan enrolled in the Florida Medically Needy Share of Cost Program and worked with her local pharmacy. As a result of these efforts, Susan was able to get her medications within 48 hours.

###

In March 2013, Senator Rubio’s staff assisted Ms. Brown, a resident of the Treasure Coast who had stage IV cancer and had recently applied for Social Security disability benefits. Ms. Brown contacted our office for assistance expediting her case. As a result of our inquiry, it was discovered that Ms. Brown’s claim had not yet been entered for processing. Our staff worked with the Social Security Administration, and her claim was immediately processed with a favorable outcome.

###

In August 2012, Erica discovered her Social Security number belonged to someone else when her financial aid application was denied three months prior to entering college as a freshman. After Senator Rubio’s office got involved, a new Social Security card was processed in one day and hand delivered by a Social Security Administration (SSA) representative within one week, allowing Erica to proceed with her college plans.

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Taxes

In December 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to assist Harry and Linda, residents of Central Florida. After recently adopting a child, the IRS disallowed Harry and Linda’s tax credit. The couple reached out to the Senator’s office, and a member of our staff contacted the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service and asked them to review the case. Shortly after, the couple found out the IRS approved their tax credit and they subsequently received their tax refund of $13,549.

###
In September 2011, Diana, a floral shop owner, contacted Senator Rubio’s office regarding the status of her tax refund. She had overpaid her taxes by over $28,000 the year before and her refund was held up as the IRS continued to review her tax return. As the owner of a seasonal business, Diana was dependent on her refund to keep her business operating during the slow months of the year. The Senator’s staff contacted the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service, and her matter was resolved favorably. Diana received a refund check in the amount of $28,679.06.

###

Emmanuel, a resident of Palm Beach County, contacted Senator Rubio’s office in July 2012 because he had his identity stolen, thereby preventing him from receiving his 2011 tax refund. A member of the staff forwarded his case to the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service where they were able to correct Emmanuel’s tax record and process his tax return. His refund was later released.

###

During a Mobile Office Hours, Patricia, a constituent who managed a family trust that was set up to avoid future accounting and financial issues on behalf of her aunt and uncle, approached the Senator’s staff regarding a tax liability issue with the IRS in the amount of $72,000 when the home in the trust was sold at a loss. After intervention from the Senator’s staff, the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service was able to cancel the tax assessment. Her case was closed in December 2013.

###

John works with a Palm Beach Gardens non-profit organization, which lost its tax exempt status in 2012 due to a failure to file a tax return. The organization reapplied for an expedited status with the IRS and was told the decision would be rendered after the date of their large fundraising event. Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the Taxpayer Advocate Service on his behalf and were able to get the program its 501(c)3 status reinstated three days before the fundraising event.

###

In September 2011, Garry, a Brevard constituent and a former NASA engineer who was laid off from the Kennedy Space Center, decided to start a non-profit organization to educate students, teachers and the public about the importance of science and math and how it relates to the space program. Garry contacted the Senator’s office when there was a delay in processing his 501(c)3 application for non-profit status. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the IRS and his application was finally approved.

###
In January 2012, after months of unsuccessfully trying to resolve the issue on her own, Mayra, a Central Florida resident, contacted Senator Rubio’s office because her tax refund had been debited to a checking account that did not belong to her. The Senator’s staff was able to work with the U.S. Department of the Treasury on Mayra’s behalf and found that the refund had been deposited into a bogus checking account. The agency was able to get the funds returned by the bank and Mayra got her tax refund.

###

Ruben, a Central Florida resident, contacted Senator Rubio’s office after he was unable to receive his 2011 tax refund due to identity theft. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service and was able to gather the necessary information from Ruben. His matter was resolved and his tax refund of $4,048.00 was released to him.

###

Marvin, a Gulf Coast resident, contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance after his IRS tax refund had been intercepted and fraudulently cashed. His tax refund included a first-time homebuyer’s credit and was for over $8,000. The Senator’s staff contacted the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and their fraud group determined that the check was, in fact, cashed by someone else. Marvin’s new refund check was quickly approved and reissued.

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**International Issues**

In May 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a case for James, a Central Florida resident, who contacted our office because his pregnant wife was robbed while traveling in Pakistan. Her green card was missing, and she was unable to contact the American Consulate for assistance. With concern for her well-being and need for medical attention, James contacted the Senator’s office for assistance. A caseworker contacted the Consulate in Islamabad and, within hours, the officers approved her travel letter and she was able to return to Florida.

###

In January 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Dario, a small business owner. Dario applied with the Department of the Treasury’s Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) for approval of three wine labels so that his company could import and sell wine from Argentina. A member of Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the Treasury Department to streamline the process, and all the labels were approved. Dario’s company now imports and sells the wine in the United States.
In 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff helped Angela, a South Florida constituent. Angela’s husband went sailing last year and was declared missing. After an exhaustive search by rescue personnel, his boat was found empty. Angela was trying to obtain a Consular Report of Presumptive Death Abroad (ROPDA) from the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo, but had not been successful. A member of the staff contacted the State Department and the ROPDA was finally approved.

In September 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to help Justin, a Gulf Coast constituent who contacted our office for assistance with his passport. He was scheduled to travel on a mission trip to install electricity power lines at a camp for AIDS victims, but his passport application was still pending with the agency. A member of Rubio’s staff contacted the passport agency and provided additional documentation that was required to complete the review. Justin’s application was approved in time for his scheduled departure.

In March 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a nonimmigrant visa issue for a musical group from Mexico that was scheduled to tour in Florida. The group applied for nonimmigrant worker visas to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). The first performance was scheduled in the coming days and their application was still pending. A member of the Senator’s staff found that the application was approved, but the State Department, which issues the visa, had not received the notice. Through the office’s work, the notice was forwarded to the Consulate and the visas were issued within 24 hours.

In September 2013, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to help Victor and his wife Theresa. Theresa needed a kidney transplant and had been on a waiting list for three years. With the help of her medical care team, Theresa discovered that her sister who lives in South America may be a match. Unfortunately, her sister had previously been denied a visa to visit the United States. Victor contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance and a member of the staff contacted the American Embassy and provided them with documentation which confirmed that primary testing showed a high likelihood for a match. Theresa’s sister returned to the Embassy with an additional financial affidavit showing capability to cover the cost of the procedure. After careful consideration of the new materials, the Embassy approved the visa.
In July 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a case for Enrique, a South Florida resident and president of a competitive youth sports organization. The organization was hosting a tournament the following month and invited youth from several countries to participate. One group of athletes and their parents were unable to secure visa appointments at their local consulate in time for the tournament. Enrique contacted our office for assistance. A member of the office reached out to the consulate and requested an expedited appointment for the athletes and their parents. The consulate granted an earlier appointment for the athletes, and their visas were approved in time to participate in the tournament.

###

Maria is a resident of South Florida. Her son, Cristian, was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with cancer. Her other son, Juan, lives in Cuba and applied for his visa to come be with the family during this challenging time, but was still pending approval. Maria contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance. A member of the staff reached out to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, Cuba to request an expeditious review of the application. The family supplied a letter from the hospital to prove the urgent medical situation, and Juan was subsequently issued the visa.

###

In September 2011, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Phares, a Miami-Dade constituent. His brother Jorel, from Haiti, was in need of a kidney transplant and Phares was a match. Rubio’s staff was able to assist in obtaining a humanitarian visa for Jorel to have the transplant.

###

Alfredo, a constituent from Miami, was in need of a kidney transplant and the only viable donor was his sister who resides in Peru. In December 2011, after his sister was denied a tourist visa, Alfredo contacted our office. The Senator’s staff requested reconsideration because of Alfredo’s medical condition, and the Embassy approved the visa shortly thereafter. Alfredo’s sister was able to travel to the U.S. for the transplant.

###

Carl was engaged to be married with a Tunisian national. Since his father had been diagnosed with a terminal illness, he wanted to be married as soon as possible to ensure his father’s presence. However, his fiancée’s visa application was under administrative review. He contacted the Senator’s office for assistance and a caseworker submitted a request for expedited review and included evidence of the medical condition. The visa was approved within 2 days. The couple married in North Florida – with Carl’s father proudly in attendance.

###
Daisy, a resident of Broward County, was in need of help with an immigration issue in May 2012. Daisy’s mother had a terminal illness and was admitted to hospice care. Saddened that it had been over 30 years since her mother had seen her sister who lives in another country, Daisy contacted the Senator’s office for assistance. A caseworker provided information on how the relative could apply for a visa and made a request for an expedited interview due to Daisy’s mother’s deteriorating health. The visa was granted, and the sisters were reunited on Mother’s Day.

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The Aqua Quest Crew

In May 2014, members of the Tarpon Springs-based Aqua Quest crew were wrongly imprisoned in a Honduras jail on charges of smuggling weapons into the country. Senator Rubio became involved in efforts to ensure the crew was released and allowed to return to the United States.

The Senator’s involvement led him to question federal officials at an official hearing for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Rubio addressed the issue with the U.S. ambassadorial nominee to Honduras, urging him to remain committed to the safety and well-being of the jailed Aqua Quest crew.

NBC Tampa covered Senator Rubio’s involvement, which can be seen here.

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Unforgettable Cases

Mr. Hernandez, born in Cuba, applied for naturalization under the benefit granted to individuals who joined our armed forces during war time. Mr. Hernandez served during the Vietnam War, but in order to be naturalized his file had to be reconstructed. With the help of Senator Rubio’s office, he was sworn in as a U.S. citizen on May 30, 2014.

Reuters, Susan Cooper Eastman:
U.S. Army veteran Mario Hernandez, 58, was sworn in as a citizen on Wednesday, decades after he believed he had been naturalized when he enlisted during the Vietnam War era. Immigration officials apologized to Cuban-born Hernandez after admitting the agency made a mistake in March when it rejected a naturalization application he had filed to correct his status. “I feel like I have been reborn. I feel like crying. I feel like jumping for joy,” a teary-eyed Hernandez told reporters after the brief ceremony in Jacksonville. The ceremony at the local office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services was arranged after national media reported his story last week.

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In February 2013, Martin of Port St. Lucie wrote a letter to the TCPalm thanking Senator Rubio for his assistance in ensuring his father was honored with a Purple Heart for his service in World War I:

“\[text\]I want to thank Sen. Marco Rubio, F-Fla. Recently I came across my father’s discharge papers from World War I. It showed my father, Philip Cohen, had been wounded in action Oct. 16, 1918, at the battle in the Argonne Forest in France. He was not awarded any citation for his wounds. I checked and discovered that Congress approved the awarding of a Purple Heart for wounds received during a war before my father’s being wounded. I contacted Rubio’s office in an effort to correct this oversight. Within a month, he had sent the necessary paperwork to the Department of the Army which, in turn, issued a certificate and Purple Heart in my father’s name. As I look at these awards I am proud to be able to pass these honors down to my children and grandchildren. Thank you to Sen. Rubio for his efforts that have made this possible."

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In February 2012, Senator Rubio’s staff was able to successfully resolve a casework issue for Thomas, a Vietnam veteran residing in Duval County. Thomas was awarded the Purple Heart in 1991, but it had been stolen. He reached out to our office for help obtaining a replacement copy of his military service medals, including his Purple Heart. Senator Rubio’s staff contacted the National Personnel Records Center on his behalf, and Thomas received a set of his medals.

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Jack, an active duty military member residing in Tampa, was served with an eviction notice just weeks before he was scheduled to deploy. The home he was renting with his wife and child went into foreclosure when the landlord’s short sale was not approved. Jack had signed a one-year lease before the house was foreclosed. Shortly after he was served with an eviction notice, he contacted Senator Rubio’s office for assistance. In May 2014, a member of the staff contacted Fannie Mae. After that contact, the eviction was cancelled, the lease execution was pending, and repairs had been authorized to allow Jack’s family to remain in the home while he was deployed.

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Laura Castillo, a 15-year old girl in Miami, was diagnosed with cancer and was receiving treatment through La Liga Contra el Cancer, a non-profit that provides cancer treatment to those who can’t afford it. Unfortunately, her mom lived in Nicaragua and was denied a visa to come visit Laura in the U.S.

La Liga reached out to Senator Rubio’s office for assistance. Our constituent service team then contacted the State Department and, after much hard work, was eventually able to secure a visa for the mother to visit her sick daughter.

At an annual telethon for La Liga Contra el Cancer, they were reunited on stage. Pictures of the reunion are available here.
A Sample of Thank You Letters

Thank you for all the time you have invested in my family. Your kindness will not be forgotten this Holiday Season. We wish you a blessed and Merry Christmas.

Dear Senator Rubio:

I am writing to you to thank you for your assistance in helping me attain my Survivors Pension benefits from the Veterans Association. As of yesterday the VA awarded me the benefits and made them retroactive to April 26, 2013. This milestone has allowed me to continue my residence at Prosperity Place. At age 93, it is such a relief to have this health care.

Dear Marco Rubio,

I want to thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter that I wrote to you a few months back and reacting immediately. I was waiting for Social Security benefits for over six years. Thanks to your help, I am now receiving my monthly checks rightfully so you are truly a blessing to me. You don't just take the side of a man of your word. You did so and more that I ever expected and you truly have my vote. I am so glad you had my time and attended my issues truly blessed. I appreciate you Senator Rubio.

Ann

My husband and I would like to thank you and your staff for the assistance in obtaining the medals my father was awarded during his service in World War II. Your staff expedited this request much faster than we expected, for which we are grateful. Our son was very excited to receive those medals and had displayed them proudly along with his grandfather's flag. Our family is very proud of the service dedication and service.

Dear Senator Rubio:

On May 21, 2013, we sent you a letter concerning our problems with our AARP/United Health Care program being incorrectly submitted to Social Security and our inability to get Social Security to correct the matter.

I appreciate your contacting Social Security and AARP on our behalf because your contact brought about a corrected change as it was supposed to be initially and we just learned this week that our doctors have been notified of this correction. Without your involvement we are certain we would have been left with thousands of dollars in bills.

We are grateful for your help.

Anna
I want to thank the people of Florida for the honor and privilege of serving them in the U.S. Senate. I am truly blessed to have this chance to work on their behalf.

As thousands of Floridians can attest, the stories outlined in this report – and many more that our office has been involved in – simply wouldn’t be possible without our constituent service team, which works tirelessly every day to help others. They help ensure that our safety net is there to catch people who have fallen, and help them get back on their feet. They help people get the assistance they need and the benefits they have earned during a lifetime of work or service to our country. They help make sure the federal government doesn’t stand in the way of people realizing their American Dream. Sometimes they encounter problems that can only be solved legislatively. But in some cases, they literally help save lives.

These staff members have come to our office from varying backgrounds and possess talents that not only make our office stronger, but also their families and communities.

We have individuals who are fluent in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, allowing us to serve most people without language being a barrier. We have younger staffers who have only recently experienced the satisfaction that comes from receiving thank you notes from constituents we’ve helped, and we have more experienced staffers that still feel the same sense of fulfillment even several hundred thank you notes into their careers. Some still shed tears of pride and joy when they watch people they’ve helped become American citizens. We have individuals who, when they aren’t serving constituents in their official capacities, are leaders in community and civic organizations. They are mothers and fathers. One is a veteran, now serving her fellow veterans. One is working towards a law degree. Another is an accomplished singer that I worry we may ultimately lose one day to American Idol.

Together, they have helped our office reach today’s 500th Mobile Office Hours milestone, helped us serve thousands of constituents over the past three and a half years, helped open our eyes to the problems inherent in the federal bureaucracy and, ultimately, made me exceedingly proud to serve the people of Florida alongside them.

Thank you.

Marco