

9/30/2017

Irela Bagué, *president*, Bagué Group

Last week: After mounting pressure and pleas from Puerto Rican leaders, the president lifted the Jones Act; an archaic law that allows only American made and operated vessels to do business between local ports. The law often hinders relief and recovery efforts because of its exclusion and bias. The fact that the policy was immediately lifted for Hurricane Harvey and Irma relief for Florida and Texas coasts will not go unnoticed by the 3.4 million U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico who continue to suffer from the lack of food and water more than a week after Hurricane Maria decimated the island.

Looking ahead: An inspiring example of putting people before profits was the humanitarian mission made by Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines this week. The company cancelled a planned cruise and instead sent donated supplies and brought evacuees from both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to South Florida. Many U.S. corporations, particularly those headquartered in Florida, should take cues from Royal Caribbean's act of service and corporate selflessness. Now is the time to step up to do more for others.

9/24/2017

Irela Bagué, *president*, Bagué Group

Last week: Hurricanes Harvey and Irma had disastrous impacts to the U.S. and the president has made sure that the States of Texas and Florida are very well supported by the federal government in response and in plans for rebuilding. Let's hope that the same support will be provided to the survivors of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which have devastated the islands of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It should not matter that these are not official states; what should matter is that the people who live there are fellow Americans, too.

Looking ahead: Sewage spills were another nuisance brought to the State of Florida. Cities of Jacksonville, Fort Myers and Collier and Miami-Dade counties all got their share of sewage spills running into waterways. This happened because we have not effectively addressed aging water infrastructure statewide. As Florida begins to recover and rebuild, this is a good opportunity for our lawmakers to find a way to adequately fund water infrastructure similar to how we continuously plan and improve our transportation systems.

9/9/2017

Irela Bagué, *president*, Bagué Group

Last week: The president's decision to remove protections for "dreamers," the 800,000 children who were brought in to this country by their parents illegally at no fault of their own. They are now young adults who were offered protections by our country in exchange for their excellence. This is an unconscionable act by the president, who again is bullying and insulting another group of mostly Latinos. Let's hope the Republican lead Congress can muster up enough courage to stand up and protect this generation of future professionals and leaders.

Looking ahead: As South Florida experiences one of the worst storms in our history, it has been impressive how well the federal, state and local governments have prepared us for this natural disaster. It is also comforting to know that Miami-Dade has one of the strongest building codes in the nation. Irma is its biggest test. I hope that after the storm is gone and recovery begins, our leaders will take note that the climate is changing regardless of the cause. We must have a plan to manage the threat of sea level rise and set a statewide plan for resiliency.

8/17/2017

Irela Bagué, *president*, Bagué Group

Last week: The President signed another reckless executive order removing flood protection for future construction of federally funded buildings and infrastructure. This decision will have great consequences for the future of all coastal areas around the country, including the State of Florida where some communities are already at great risk to flooding and storm surge. Flooding is the country's most common natural disaster. FEMA estimates that flood damage cost Americans \$260 billion over the last 30 years. The President is a real estate developer and knows that building projects that are not resilient are worthless investments. Taxpayers deserve better.

8/6/2017

Irela Bagué, *president*, Bagué Group

Last week: The impacts of Tropical Storm Emily remind us that resilience planning should be top of mind. The City of Miami Beach received approximately seven inches of rain within a few hours bringing significant flooding to many neighborhoods. Although the city is in the process of upgrading its stormwater system with larger pumps and pipes it becomes clear that government alone will not provide all the solutions. There is a need for individual actions as well. Miami Beach is at the forefront of this challenge and we all can learn as they lead the world in adapting to sea level rise.

Looking ahead: The White House should stop using a discredited Mariel boatlift study to prop up its latest attack on legal immigration. The flawed study states that the exodus by Cubans in the 1980s hurt wages in Miami. However, research shows that the arrival of Cuban migrants increased wages in the city over time. According to the Census Bureau, Latinos, particularly Cubans, have thrived in Miami in comparison to other cities and over 60 percent of Miami businesses are minority-owned. Let's face it, immigration has made Miami the global city that it is and I call that proof of merit.