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**TRADE**

## **Next Florida FTAA leader named**

**A Latin American specialist will head the Florida FTAA, as its president, Jorge L. Arrizurieta, departs for consulting work at the law firm of Akerman Senterfitt.**

By JANE BUSSEY

[jbussev@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:jbussev@MiamiHerald.com)

Florida FTAA, whose goal of landing a regional trade headquarters for Miami has fallen victim to stymied trade talks, announced Tuesday the departure of its first director, Jorge L. Arrizurieta, who will be replaced by a Latin American specialist.

The change in leadership at Florida FTAA comes as efforts have stalled to forge a hemispheric trade pact, known as the Free Trade Area of the Americas. FTAA negotiators have not met since February 2004 and missed their January 2005 deadline to complete negotiations. Instead, Washington has chosen to negotiate trade and investment deals with individual countries.

Arrizurieta, who will stay on as a Florida FTAA trustee, said the group's goals will be tweaked and promoting free trade will be added to the original aim of winning an FTAA headquarters for Miami.

"Our core mission is to figure out ways to help the free-trade movement," said Arrizurieta, who earned \$125,000 annually as president of the organization.

Arrizurieta, who will join the law firm of Akerman Senterfitt as chair of its international policy group focusing on the Western Hemisphere, will be succeeded by Brian Dean, who is the regional program director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Republican Institute in Washington.

Dean, whose title will be executive director, was chosen after a search led by Florida FTAA Trustee Dominique Virchaux.

He has served as chief of staff to Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner Jr., R-Wisc., and also coordinated congressional campaigns and oversaw fundraising operations on a volunteer basis.

## **'AN INEVITABILITY'**

Dean, who attended an FTAA board meeting at the U.S. Southern Command in Doral on Tuesday, called the FTAA "an inevitability" and said Miami was the logical choice for the headquarters.

Dean said that the current FTAA stalemate has been misunderstood and what was needed was to "reorient the discussion of free trade to better reflect the political reality of the region." He pointed out that 29 of the original 34 nations in the proposed trade pact have endorsed it.

Arrizurieta said that state and local leaders have continued to support Florida FTAA's mission and a group of political, community and business leaders met on Jan. 12 to review Florida FTAA policies.

Although the Florida legislature cut a funding request of \$525,000 from last year's state budget, Arrizurieta said that over the past year, money from the governor's budget, \$100,000 from Miami-Dade County and private contributions have allowed the group to keep operating.

He said that this year the governor has requested \$525,000 for the Florida FTAA as part of his \$4.3 million budget proposal for international advocacy. The city of Miami has not given money since 2003.

## **LOCAL SUPPORT**

But Arrizurieta said that Miami, the county and business organizations such as Enterprise Florida, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Beacon Council and the Miami Beach Convention Center and Visitors Bureau can be counted on to write checks or offer other support when needed.

Miami and Miami-Dade County, for example, came up with funds to host trade negotiations between the United States and Andean countries last year in an event where the bill came to half a million dollars.

Arrizurieta said that during his nearly three years at the Florida FTAA, the group secured a number of endorsements from Latin American and Caribbean presidents for Miami as the site for the FTAA secretariat.

The presidents of El Salvador, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador are on the record supporting Miami's bid. Colombia and Costa Rica have given conditional support.

But these endorsements are not binding, and there have been changes in the presidency in some countries. The new president of Uruguay, for example, has not said whether he is for or against the Miami site, which was endorsed by his predecessor.

In addition, Washington never publicly backed Miami or any other U.S. city that threw its hat into the ring. Miami; Port-of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago; and Panama City, Panama, have been the most active candidates in lobbying for the headquarters.

"Given the delay in the FTAA, the additional accomplishment was the work we did in the bilateral trade movement, mainly and most significantly in DR-CAFTA (The trade pact that includes the United States, the Dominican Republic and Central American countries)," said Arrizurieta.

Arrizurieta, who was a long-time Republican and Bush fundraiser, received praise from Gov. Jeb Bush.

"Under Jorge's leadership, Florida has solidified its position as the 'Gateway of the Americas' and has had a very positive impact to the state's trade economy, which will be felt for years," said Bush, who appointed Arrizurieta to the Florida FTAA in June 2003.

Editor's Note: The Miami Herald contributed to the Florida FTAA during a 2003 ministers meeting in Miami but no longer provides funding.