



# Joe Garcia

Florida 26



Research Book  
1/4/2016

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## POTENTIAL HITS

### NEGATIVES

#### **Joe Garcia is a Hypocritical and Corrupt Politician Who is an Embarrassment to Our District**

In 2012, the year Joe Garcia won his seat in Congress, he did so because he promised to be a different type of politician—an anti-David Rivera, who was surrounded in controversy for propping up a shadow candidate during the primary.<sup>1</sup> Garcia said of Rivera, “Our community has been embarrassed by politicians who have broken the public trust, now it is time to move forward in a positive way.”<sup>2</sup> What a hypocrite! Garcia’s own chief of staff admitted to also propping up a shadow candidate<sup>3</sup> and committing ballot fraud.<sup>4</sup> Garcia claims he knew nothing about these crimes but court documents suggest otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Garcia should heed his own advice—he broke the public trust several times and is an embarrassment to our community. We need to move on and forget Joe Garcia.

#### **Joe Garcia is a Loser Who Can’t Get Things Done—We Need Someone Who Can**

Joe Garcia ran for Congress four times and he lost every time but one. He is a career-losing politician. Even when he was in Congress—his major victories were half-hearted at best. He was given the opportunity to lead the House into an immigration reform deal but all the fanfare and press conferences<sup>6</sup> he held yielded no results. He claims that he stopped insurance rates from skyrocketing,<sup>7</sup> but the truth is that all he did was what politicians do best – claim to fix a problem when nothing has been fixed at all. If we elect him in the primary, there is no doubt he will lose in the general election. Us Democrats need to elect someone who can actually win against Carlos Curbelo, not someone who has already lost against him.

#### **Joe Garcia Wants to Burden Students with Debt**

Joe Garcia claims that he wants to keep student loan rate to 3.4%, so why did he support the so-called Smarter Solutions for Students Act,<sup>8</sup> which the Democratic Party called the “Students Pay More Act?”<sup>9</sup> The bill would have been disastrous for students because it changed the student loan program from a fixed interest rate to a variable interest, which means students pay more in the long run.<sup>10</sup> No wonder only four Democrats voted for it,<sup>11</sup> and it should be no surprise that Joe Garcia was one of them. We should elect someone who will look out for students, not someone that will make it harder for students to climb out of debt.

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<sup>1</sup> “Ethics problems lose edge as re-election issue,” Donna Cassata, Associated Press, 6/15/2012

<sup>2</sup> “Race pits incumbent against veteran,” John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>3</sup> “Ex-congressman’s former chief of staff, suspected ringer candidate plead not guilty to election offenses,” Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 4/29/2015

<sup>4</sup> “Ex-aide to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia to head to jail in absentee-ballot case,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/20/2013; “Jeffrey Garcia, ex-aide to Rep. Joe Garcia, pleads guilty, will serve 90 days in jail,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/21/2013

<sup>5</sup> “Court record shows ex-Rep. Joe Garcia may have known about ‘shadow’ candidate,” Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 6/10/2015

<sup>6</sup> “House Democrats unveil plan, hoping to nudge border debate,” David Nakamura, Washington Post, 10/3/2013

<sup>7</sup> “Joe Garcia, Carlos Curbelo spar in debate in Key West,” Cammy Clark, Miami Herald, 9/24/2014

<sup>8</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia once again reached across the aisle to keep student loans affordable for South Florida’s middle class,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 5/23/2013

<sup>9</sup> “Democrats rip Republicans on student loan vote but what about Joe Garcia?” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 5/24/2013

<sup>10</sup> [“Letter to the House opposing the Smart Solutions for Students Act \(H.R. 1911\),” National Education Association, 5/23/2013](#)

<sup>11</sup> “Democrats rip Republicans on student loan vote but what about Joe Garcia?” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 5/24/2013

### **Joe Garcia Supports For-Profit Colleges Because They Donate Money to Him**

2015 saw repeated scandal after scandal of for-profit colleges, and it is no wonder that for-profit colleges have loose standards in Florida since they are major donors to politicians.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Garcia received tens of thousands of dollars from Dade Medical College. It is no wonder that Garcia did all he could as a congressman to oppose the Obama's administration's "gainful employment" regulations, which would have taken away federal loans from for-profit colleges if graduates had to spend more than 8% of their income on loan repayments.<sup>13</sup> He sent letters to the Administration arguing that for-profit colleges are "similar" to nonprofit private colleges.<sup>14</sup> We need to think of electing someone to Congress who will serve the needs of constituents, not fundraisers.

### **Joe Garcia is Supported by a Network of Shady Donors**

Ernesto Perez. Dr. Salomon Melegen. Claudio Osorio. Roberto and William Isaías. All are contributors or have close family members who, in total, contributed to Joe Garcia in the tens of thousands. Perez ran the now defunct Dade Medical College. Dr. Melegen is in prison for ripping off the government millions in false Medicare claims. Osorio faced prison time for fraud and money laundering related to his companies. The Isaías brothers are exiles from Ecuador, which the Ecuadorian government claimed robbed the government millions of dollars with fake bank loan claims. No wonder Garcia was such a good fundraiser—he is supported by crooks and thieves.

#### ***Alternative: Garcia Would Rather Have Stolen Isaías Money Than Integrity***

*Joe Garcia criticized previous opponents for dealing with the Isaías brothers, but the truth is that he is the worst type of hypocrite because he's also been in cahoots with the brothers—or at least has tried. Garcia admitted to trying to solicit work for them for \$10,000 but that the brothers never hired him. He also admits that he received tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from Isaías relatives and calls Roberto Isaías a friend. He even abused his position of power and made immigration calls on the family's behalf even though they were not his constituents.<sup>15</sup> It's clear that Garcia doesn't work for us—he works for those that donate thousands to his campaigns.*

### **Joe Garcia's Cuba Policy is Compromised**

While in Congress, Joe Garcia said that he supported the embargo<sup>16</sup> yet he pushed the Administration to approve the testing and marketing of a diabetes treatment<sup>17</sup> developed by the Castro government.<sup>18</sup> He claimed that his push was in order "to save lives" but later admitted that he started advocating after pharmaceutical lobbyist and former politician Bill Delahunt lobbied him on the issue. This is the same lobbyist who went to Hugo Chavez's funeral and gave Garcia thousands days before Garcia wrote letters asking the government to approve the drug. When asked about his stance during a debate Garcia did what politicians do best – lie. He said he never supported the drugs' use in the U.S. and only supported trials so that it could benefit us economically. We should elect someone who uses the office for the right

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<sup>12</sup> ["Florida lawmakers consider bills to protect for-profit college students," Michael Vasquez, Miami Herald, 11/30/2015](#)

<sup>13</sup> "For-profit colleges flex political muscle," Michael Vasquez, Miami Herald, 4/23/2015

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.highereducationforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/5-27-14-Sec.-Duncan-GE-Comment-Letter.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> "Miami congressional candidate Carlos Curbelo represented Ecuadorean fugitives," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/10/2014

<sup>16</sup> "Garcia supports US testing of Cuban diabetes drug," Christine Armario, Associated Press, 10/8/2013

<sup>17</sup> "Rep. Garcia's push for Cuba drug trial tests support for embargo," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/7/2013

<sup>18</sup> "Rep. Garcia's push for Cuba drug trial tests support for embargo," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/7/2013

reasons—not somebody who uses influence at the behest of their lobbyist friends, especially friends that support regimes like Castro’s or Chavez’s.

### **Joe Garcia is Anti-Obamacare**

When President Obama needed Democrats to stand up for his signature health care bill, Joe Garcia was not there. He defected. Instead of supporting the President, Garcia voted to delay the individual and employee mandates several times.<sup>19</sup> He even voted with Republicans to delay the mandate for five years.<sup>20</sup> He also voted for a controversial GOP bill that the President said would have “gut” Obamacare.<sup>21</sup> How can he say that when it comes to Obamacare, he’s “all in”<sup>22</sup> and then vote to destroy most important portions of the law? Garcia is a two-faced politician who will say one thing and do another. We cannot trust him.

### **Joe Garcia Wants to be Back in Congress for the Perks**

In his short stint in Congress, Joe Garcia went on at least two international trips—not paid for by himself or by his campaign. Garcia spent time in Israel<sup>23</sup> and in Colombia,<sup>24</sup> all paid for by outside groups hoping to influence lawmakers. Members of Congress get away with free foreign trips. Why wouldn’t Joe Garcia want to indulge in that perk? We should vote for someone who would rather travel back to Florida than have outside interest fund world travel.

### **Joe Garcia Does Not Protect the Environment**

Joe Garcia claims to be a stalwart supporter of conservation issues. Yet, in September 2014, Garcia sent out a press release saying “I believe the development of energy infrastructure, such as Keystone XL, is critical in this country.”<sup>25</sup> He was also one of only eight Democrats to vote for a \$30 billion energy bill, with almost half of the funding going exclusively to the nuclear energy industry.<sup>26</sup>

And previously, in May 2014, he voted to pass a highly controversial Republican bill through the Natural Resources Committee that would have superseded parts of the Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act. It would have allowed for overfishing and created loopholes that undermine conservation.<sup>27</sup> No Democrat voted for the bill but Joe Garcia. When questioned why he voted for the bill, his office had no explanation to give.<sup>28</sup>

Not only is he an unreliable vote for Democratic causes, but when questioned he hides or refuses to give explanations for his actions. We cannot trust that, if elected, Garcia wouldn’t pull something like this again.

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<sup>19</sup> “Hawkings: Obama touts health law as some nervous Democrats defect,” David Hawkings, Congressional Quarterly News, 7/18/2013

<sup>20</sup> “House passes bill to delay Obamacare,” WFIN 1330AM (Findlay, Ohio), 3/14/2014

<sup>21</sup> “Most vulnerable House Democrats side with GOP on ‘Obamacare’ vote,” Scott Bland, National Journal, 11/15/2013

<sup>22</sup> “For Obamacare, it’s finally showtime,” David Nather, Politico, 1/1/2014

<sup>23</sup> “Florida Reps. Frankel, Murphy join trip to Israel that raises questions of influence,” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 8/6/2013

<sup>24</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia will visit Colombia to discuss imperative matters impacting both countries,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/14/2013

<sup>25</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s statement on American Energy Solutions for Lower Costs and More American Jobs Act,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014

<sup>26</sup> [H.R. 2609, Vote#345, 7/10/2013](#)

<sup>27</sup> [“Reversing Course: H.R. 4742 undermines progress in rebuilding U.S. fish populations,” Pew charitable Trusts, June 2014](#)

<sup>28</sup> “Fisheries: House panel Oks Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization along party lines,” Jessica Estepa, E&E News, 5/29/2014

### **Joe Garcia Betrayed Democrats During the 2013 Government Shutdown**

In the midst of the 2013 government shutdown that froze the country, Joe Garcia broke ranks with Democrats and joined the Republicans in backing a number of bills.<sup>29</sup> When Democrats and President Obama were making a stand on issues important to regular Americans, Garcia buckled and helped the Republicans further their cause. He was one of only 16 Democrats to cower to Tea Party and Republican leaders. He is an embarrassment to the Democratic Party and should not be elected ever again.

### **Joe Garcia's Budget Priorities Are All Wrong**

In 2014, Joe Garcia voted against Democratic legislation<sup>30</sup> that would have dismantled Paul Ryan and the Republicans' disastrous budget proposal. Instead of voting for an increase in domestic spending on things such as infrastructure, SNAP, and jobs, Joe Garcia voted to protect the uber wealthy and corporations that take advantage of the tax code for their benefit. He also voted several times to keep sequestration's across-the-board cuts<sup>31</sup> that resulted in a federal shutdown that cost the economy billions.<sup>32</sup> Joe Garcia's budget priorities come at a cost to regular Americans. We cannot put him back in office.

### **Joe Garcia Consistently Votes for Certain Special Interests – Oil and Wall Street**

Joe Garcia consistently departs from voting with his party when it comes to two very distinct special interests—Wall Street and Big Oil. On Wall Street, Garcia has voted for bills<sup>33</sup> that would exempt Wall Street players from federal rules and Dodd-Frank regulations made in the wake of the 2008 Recession. With big oil, he votes in the interests of fossil fuel energy,<sup>34</sup> pipeline operators<sup>35</sup> and in favor of exporting fuels at the expense of government oversight.<sup>36</sup> With Joe Garcia in office, there would be no telling how much Wall Street and the fossil fuel industry could get him to do.

#### ***ALT: Joe Garcia votes for Wall Street over Regular Floridians***

*Joe Garcia consistently departs from voting with his party when it comes to two very distinct special interests—Wall Street and Big Oil. On Wall Street, Garcia has voted for bills<sup>37</sup> that would exempt Wall Street players from federal rules and Dodd-Frank regulations made in the wake of the 2008 Recession. We know his interests lie with New Yorkers on Wall Street, not with Floridians.*

#### ***ALT: Joe Garcia Votes for Energy and Against the Environment***

*Joe Garcia is more interested in catering to the needs of fossil fuel interests<sup>38</sup> and pipeline operators<sup>39</sup> than he is in protecting the environment. If he cares as much about the environment as he claims, then why does he favor of exporting fuels at the expense of government*

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<sup>29</sup> "57 Democrats join House GOP to fund key departments, programs," Ashe Schow, The Examiner, 10/4/2013

<sup>30</sup> [H. Con. Res. 96, Vote #172, 4/9/2014](#); [H. Con. Res. 96, Vote #176, 4/10/2014](#)

<sup>31</sup> [H. Con. Res. 25, Vote #83, 3/20/2013](#); [H. Con. Res. 25, Vote #84, 3/20/2013](#); [H. Con. Res. 25, Vote #87, 3/20/2013](#)

<sup>32</sup> "Here's how much the government shutdown cost the economy," Eliana Dockterman, TIME, 10/17/2013

<sup>33</sup> [H.R. 4413, Vote #349, 6/24/2014](#); [H.R. 5405, Vote #501, 9/16/2014](#); [H.R. 992, Vote #569, 10/30/2013](#); [H.R. 1105, Vote #622, 12/4/2013](#)

<sup>34</sup> [H.R. 4923, Vote #381, 7/10/2014](#); [H.R. 5078, Vote #489, 9/9/2014](#)

<sup>35</sup> [H.R. 1900, Vote #611, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 1900, Vote #607, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 3, Vote #175, 5/22/2013](#); [H.R. 3, Vote #176, 5/22/2013](#)

<sup>36</sup> [H.R. 1900, Vote #611, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 1900, Vote #607, 11/21/2013](#)

<sup>37</sup> [H.R. 4413, Vote #349, 6/24/2014](#); [H.R. 5405, Vote #501, 9/16/2014](#); [H.R. 992, Vote #569, 10/30/2013](#); [H.R. 1105, Vote #622, 12/4/2013](#)

<sup>38</sup> [H.R. 4923, Vote #381, 7/10/2014](#); [H.R. 5078, Vote #489, 9/9/2014](#)

<sup>39</sup> [H.R. 1900, Vote #611, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 1900, Vote #607, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 3, Vote #175, 5/22/2013](#); [H.R. 3, Vote #176, 5/22/2013](#)

*oversight?<sup>40</sup> Why would he allow companies to put pesticides in water without the EPA issuing a permit?<sup>41</sup> Or vote against limiting greenhouse gases?<sup>42</sup> Why does he vote for fracking?<sup>43</sup> For a legislator who claimed to love the environment, he has a funny way of showing it. We cannot trust him to do what's right by protecting Florida's environment.*

### **Joe Garcia is a Consistent Vote for Corporate Tax Breaks and Loopholes**

Joe Garcia is a friend that big corporations and businesses can count on. While in Congress, Garcia consistently voted to give tax breaks to businesses and to make permanent loopholes that big corporations could easily exploit.<sup>44</sup> For instance, he voted to reduce the amount of time the government could tax businesses for their sales and gave corporations the same benefits of charitable deductions that individuals get.<sup>45</sup> We cannot trust Joe Garcia to do what's right and make businesses pay their fair share of taxes.

### **Joe Garcia is an Outlandish Politician and We Don't Need His Antics**

During his two-year stint in the House, Joe Garcia made headlines for outlandish reasons. Whether it was being caught half naked on a beach by celebrity gossip site TMZ,<sup>46</sup> calling the GOP the "Taliban"<sup>47</sup> or—most disgusting of all—being caught eating his own earwax while at a House hearing,<sup>48</sup> Joe Garcia has done it all. He's an embarrassment to our community and the last thing we can afford is another national headline with a Garcia gaffe prominently displayed.

### **Joe Garcia's a Bad Democrat and a Worse Moderate**

Joe Garcia claims that as a moderate, he is what the district needs. If so, why would he vote against restoring funding to the Office of Civil Rights and Liberties?<sup>49</sup> Would a moderate vote against funding reviews of immigrants pleading for clemency?<sup>50</sup> Or vote in favor of wasting money on ballistic missiles that are not necessary?<sup>51</sup> How could a so-called moderate Democrat who claims to be a defender of SNAP benefits one day,<sup>52</sup> vote against extending SNAP<sup>53</sup> another day? The truth is that Joe Garcia is neither a common sense moderate nor a Democrat. We cannot trust him.

### **Garcia Voted Against Sunsetting Use of Military Force**

While in Congress, Joe Garcia voted against ending the war in the Middle East.<sup>54</sup> Instead of pulling troops out of the Middle East and out of harm's way, he allowed the President to keep our troops in an

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<sup>40</sup> [H.R. 1900, Vote #611, 11/21/2013](#); [H.R. 1900, Vote #607, 11/21/2013](#)

<sup>41</sup> [H.R. 935, Vote #470, 7/31/2014](#)

<sup>42</sup> [H.R. 1947, Vote #260, 6/19/2013](#)

<sup>43</sup> [H.R. 2728, Vote #602, 11/20/2013](#)

<sup>44</sup> [H.R. 4438, Vote #211, 5/9/2014](#); [H.R. 4718, Vote #404, 7/11/2014](#)

<sup>45</sup> [H.R. 4453, Vote #311, 6/12/2014](#)

<sup>46</sup> "Republicans want people to see picture of shirtless congressman on beach," Anthony Man, Sun-Sentinel, 12/2/2013

<sup>47</sup> "Rep. Garcia's 'Taliban' comment riles GOP," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/1/2013

<sup>48</sup> "Wow, I'm almost trending as much as #JayZ ! #papparazzi," Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 5/14/2014

<sup>49</sup> [H.R. 2217, Vote #194, 6/5/2013](#)

<sup>50</sup> [H.R. 4660, Vote #247, 5/29/2014](#)

<sup>51</sup> [H.R. 2397, Vote #397, 7/23/2013](#)

<sup>52</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia discusses the importance of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/19/2013

<sup>53</sup> [H.R. 1947, Vote #265, 6/20/2013](#);

<sup>54</sup> [H.R. 4435, Vote#237, 5/22/2014](#)



unstable region where we are unwanted. We cannot trust Joe Garcia to do what's right for our troops and our country.

## POSITIVES

### **Joe Garcia is a Leader in the Fight for Immigration Reform**

Rep. Garcia is a leader on immigration reform, and proved himself as such during his short term in Congress. Whether it was introducing bipartisan immigration reform legislation into the House to force Republicans to vote,<sup>55</sup> fasting on behalf of those who do not have a voice,<sup>56</sup> or just speaking up and shaming other Members who say outlandish things like immigrant children are drug lords<sup>57</sup> – Rep Garcia has proven himself to be a fighter.

### **Joe Garcia Will Protect Us From Outlandish Hikes in Insurance Rates**

When homeowners saw that thanks to a federal law, their homeowners insurance rates were being raised as much as 25% and costing some owners thousands and thousands in increased rates,<sup>58</sup> Garcia was there to help. He ran on a campaign promise to protect us from the rate hikes<sup>59</sup> Washington D.C. imposed, and he delivered.<sup>60</sup> Without Garcia there leading the fight, most of us would have had to have paid thousands more in insurance rates just to live in our own homes. Garcia is looking out for us.

### **Joe Garcia is the Moderate that the District Needs**

During his time in Washington, The Washington Post rated Garcia one of the most moderate legislators in the House.<sup>61</sup> Garcia's moderate tone perfectly reflects the feelings of people within the district—we are more attuned to good ideas than unreasonably loyal to a political party. Garcia has put his neck out on the line and bucked the Democratic Party to vote for what's right. He's a moderate who will be able to work across the aisle to get things done. That's exactly what we need in Congress.

### **Joe Garcia is a Tireless Advocate for Democratic Values**

Joe Garcia is a good Democrat who worked day and night fighting for his constituents. He fought for LGBT rights as a member of the LGBT Equality Caucus<sup>62</sup> he fought against Republicans who wanted to cut SNAP funding.<sup>63</sup> Garcia understands the hardship workers go through, that is why he proposed raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour.<sup>64</sup> He's voted against the Keystone Pipeline<sup>65</sup> and made it known to big companies that they need to pay their fair share of taxes under his watch.<sup>66</sup> We know that if we vote Joe Garcia back into Congress, he will work hard for us and our shared values.

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<sup>55</sup> "New Democrat Coalition applauds introduction of comprehensive immigration reform discharge petition," New Democrat Coalition Press Release, 3/26/2014

<sup>56</sup> "Rep. Juan Vargas passes immigration reform fast to Rep. Joe Garcia," Rep. Juan Vargas Press Release, 12/5/2013

<sup>57</sup> "White House, GOP come to blows on immigration," Russell Berman, The Hill, 7/24/2013

<sup>58</sup> "Bill would halt flood insurance rate hike," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 6/17/2013

<sup>59</sup> "Race pits incumbent against veteran," John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>60</sup> "Joe Garcia, Carlos Curbelo spar in debate in Key West," Cammy Clark, Miami Herald, 9/24/2014

<sup>61</sup> "Joe Garcia draws challenger Carlos Curbelo on day he posts big cash haul," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 7/9/2013

<sup>62</sup> "Garcia, Curbelo fight for congressional seat," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 10/18/2014

<sup>63</sup> "Don't cut food stamps," Joe Garcia and Charlse Auslander, Miami Herald, 11/5/2013

<sup>64</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia visits workers on Labor Day," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/29/2014

<sup>65</sup> "Congressional votes for Florida the week of 11/4 – 11/20/2014," Targeted News Service, 11/22/2014

<sup>66</sup> "Congressman reflects after 100 days," Timothy O'hara, Key West Citizen, 4/28/2013



### **Joe Garcia Works Hard for Veterans**

Joe Garcia is a friend to veterans. He said that he would not leave Congress to go on break until Congress did its job and fixed the V.A. to ensure that our veterans were no longer on “waitlists” while having their health care compromised.<sup>67</sup> He also introduced an innovative bill that would take care of our unemployed veterans and the environment by having vets work in conservation centers.<sup>68</sup> Joe Garcia is working hard for our veterans and he will never stop to work for them and everyone else in the district.

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<sup>67</sup> “Bustos leads group of 116 lawmakers in calling on Congress to stay in session until veterans’ healthcare bill is passed,” Rep. Cheri Bustos Press Release, 7/25/2014

<sup>68</sup> “Congressman Garcia introduces veteran’s conservation corps bill,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 11/13/2013

# BIOGRAPHY

## SUMMARY

**Name:** José Antonio Garcia, Jr. aka Joe Garcia  
**SSN:**  
**DOB:** October 19, 1963  
**Birthplace:** Miami Beach  
**Parents:** Joe Sr. and Carmen Garcia  
**Spouse:** Divorced  
**Children:** Gabriela (teenager)

The son of Cuban exiles, Joe Garcia was the first Cuban-American Democrat elected to Congress from South Florida.<sup>69</sup> He earned his undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Miami, and was appointed to his first political post at 30, when he joined the board of the Florida Public Service Commission. The Commission has regulatory authority over all of Florida's utilities.<sup>70</sup>

After leaving the Commission, Garcia became the executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, known for its anti-Castro sentiment.<sup>71</sup> He served as the chairman of the Miami-Dade County Democratic Party from 2006 through 2008.<sup>72</sup>

In 2008, Joe Garcia ran against Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart for a House seat but lost by six points. Two years later, he ran against Republican Rep. David Rivera in the 26<sup>th</sup> District and lost. Between the two campaigns, he served as the Director for Minority Economic Impact in the U.S. Department of Energy.<sup>73</sup>

In 2012, Garcia decided to run again for the 26<sup>th</sup> House seat and after winning a crowded primary, he faced Rep. Rivera again. According to his CQ Member Profile, Garcia "won [the] rematch as ethics questions swirled around Rivera."<sup>74</sup> Garcia was sworn into office in January 2013.<sup>75</sup>

By July 2013, The Washington Post calculated that Joe Garcia voted with the Democratic Party about 82% of the time, thereby making him one of the most moderate members of the Florida delegation and therefore a "perfect fit" for the district, according to Garcia.<sup>76</sup> Garcia was also a member of the No Labels' Problem Solvers Group.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla)," Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

<sup>70</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla)," Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

<sup>71</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla)," Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

<sup>72</sup> [The Roads to Congress 2008, Ed. By Robert P. Watson, Pub. Lexington Books, 2010 \(147-8\)](#)

<sup>73</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla)," Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

<sup>74</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla)," Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

<sup>75</sup> [Joe Garcia, Biographical Directory, Congress.gov, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>76</sup> "Joe Garcia draws challenger Carlos Curbelo on day he posts big cash haul," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 7/9/2013

<sup>77</sup> "Murphy to join over 70 No Labels' Congressional Problem Solvers to unveil a bipartisan legislative package," Rep. Patrick Murphy Press Release, 7/16/2013

In May 2013, Joe Garcia's chief of staff abruptly resigned from his position amid allegations that he engaged in a fraudulent absentee ballot scandal.<sup>78</sup> The same chief of staff later went to jail for his role in the scheme and was later connected (and convicted) for his role in propping up a "shadow candidate" in the 2010 Congressional race.<sup>79</sup> Garcia denies any involvement or knowledge in the schemes.

Garcia also made headlines for non-political reasons. In December 2013, the celebrity website TMZ produced pictures of Rep. Joe Garcia on a beach shirtless with an unidentified woman. The NRCC issued a press release on the subject, writing that "Garcia is once again making headlines for everything under the sun other than his congressional record."<sup>80</sup>

Then in May 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia was shown on CSPAN listening to a House Judiciary Committee hearing, picking his ear and then eating what he found on his finger.<sup>81</sup> In response to the video, Garcia said, "I scratched my ear and noticed I had a hangnail. My mom always told me to keep my fingers out of my mouth, and now I know why."<sup>82</sup> On twitter he wrote, "Those darn hangnails, they'll get you every time #perceptioniseverything" and "Wow, I'm almost trending as much as #JayZ ! #papparazzi."<sup>83</sup>

In 2014, Rep. Garcia was challenged by Republican Carlos Curbelo for the 26<sup>th</sup> district seat. Garcia lost his seat to Curbelo 48.5% to 51.5%.<sup>84</sup> In February 2015, Joe Garcia became vice president of Queens Fort Capital, a "Miami Beach-based merchant and investment bank." Garcia "told the Miami Herald he will work to expand investment opportunities through federal government's EB-5 visa program, which requires investors to put up big money...in exchange for a two-year U.S. residency green card for themselves and their immediate family."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia's chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

<sup>79</sup> "Ex-congressman's top aide gets probation, fine for breaking election law," Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 9/14/2015

<sup>80</sup> "Republicans want people to see picture of shirtless congressman on beach," Anthony Man, Sun-Sentinel, 12/2/2013

<sup>81</sup> "Digging for lost treasure, Congressman Florida Democrat caught on C-SPAN picking his ear and then eating it," Joshua Gardner, Mail Online, 5/13/2014

<sup>82</sup> "Sasse, Ricketts win Neb. GOP primaries; Mooney nominated in WV-02; Conyers booted from ballot," Adam Wollner, National Journal, 5/14/2014

<sup>83</sup> "Wow, I'm almost trending as much as #JayZ ! #papparazzi," Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 5/14/2014

<sup>84</sup> [Florida 26<sup>th</sup> District – Curbelo vs. Garcia, RealClear Politics, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>85</sup> "FL26: Garcia takes Senior VP position with Miami-based QueensFort Capital," The Frontrunner, 2/25/2015 \*\*Note that Frontrunner is summarizing a story that ran in The Miami Herald, 2/24/14, which did not show up in our Nexis search.

**TIMELINE**

Year	Event
1987	Graduates University of Miami (B.A. in Political Science) <sup>86</sup>
1991	Graduates University of Miami College of Law <sup>87</sup>
1991-2000	On the Board of Florida’s Public Service Commission <sup>88</sup>
2000-?	Executive Director of Cuban American National Foundation <sup>89</sup>
2004-?	Became involved with NDN <sup>90</sup>
Nov. 2008	Lost election for FL-25 <sup>th</sup> District to incumbent Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart <sup>91</sup>
2009-April 2010	Director for Minority Economic Impact in the U.S. Department of Energy. <sup>92</sup>
Nov. 2010	Lost election for FL-26 <sup>th</sup> District to Republican David Rivera
Nov. 2012	Won election for FL-26 <sup>th</sup> District against incumbent Rep. David Rivera
Nov. 2014	Lost re-election for FL-26 <sup>th</sup> District to GOP challenger Carlos Curbelo

<sup>86</sup> [The Roads to Congress 2014, Ed. Sean D. Foreman, Pub. Lexington Books, 143 \(2015\)](#)

<sup>87</sup> [The Roads to Congress 2014, Ed. Sean D. Foreman, Pub. Lexington Books, 143 \(2015\)](#)

<sup>88</sup> [Joe Garcia, Biographical Directory, Congress.gov, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>89</sup> [“About,” Joe Garcia for Congress 2008 website, available via webarchive, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>90</sup> [“About,” Joe Garcia for Congress 2008 website, available via webarchive, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>91</sup> [The Roads to Congress 2014, Ed. Sean D. Foreman, Pub. Lexington Books, 143 \(2015\)](#)

<sup>92</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla),” Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013; “President Obama heads to Emilio and Gloria Estefan’s fundraiser,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 4/15/2010

# CAMPAIGNS

## CAMPAIGNS

### 2008 CAMPAIGN FOR FLORIDA'S 25<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#### Overview

In 2008, challenger Joe Garcia lost against incumbent Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. Diaz-Balart won 53.0% to 47.0%.<sup>93</sup>

### 2010 CAMPAIGN FOR FLORIDA'S 25<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#### Overview

In 2010, challenger Joe Garcia lost against Republican David Rivera for the open seat. Rivera won 52.1% to 43.0%.<sup>94</sup>

## ATTACKS USED BY CANDIDATES

### Rivera Raised Money While in Session

In April 2010, Garcia attacked Rivera for raising money from lobbyists while the state legislature was still in session. According to Garcia, Rivera's actions violated "the spirit" of state campaign finance laws.<sup>95</sup>

### Raised Money from Lobbyists with Business Before Legislature

Garcia said of Rivera's fundraising that it was predominantly given by people with business in front of the state legislature at the time of the contribution. Garcia said, "We need leaders that will work to end business-as-usual in Washington, not make things worse. I call on Mr. Rivera to immediately return all contributions from lobbyists and special interests with business interests presently before the Florida House."<sup>96</sup>

### Fake Mailer Sent to Attack Garcia – Connection to 2010 Oil Spill

In July 2010, a Florida State University student who formed a PAC admitted that the mailers sent were done on behalf of a Republican lobbyist. The mailers tied Garcia to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Miami Herald reported that Garcia's campaign was "considering legal action, especially since the bank statement shows money was never withdrawn to fund mailers."

Garcia himself said, "Instead of talking about the issues, somehow he's got to make me associated with Big Oil. . . To take a 19-year-old kid and make him throw racist allegations is just pathetic."<sup>97</sup>

### Rivera is Not Honest

During a debate, Garcia framed the election: "This election is about character. One has to have a politician who is honest and clear with taxpayers."<sup>98</sup>

### Rivera Accused Garcia of Raising Utility Rates

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<sup>93</sup> [The Roads to Congress 2014, Ed. Sean D. Foreman, Pub. Lexington Books, 143 \(2015\)](#)

<sup>94</sup> [Florida 25<sup>th</sup> District – Rivera vs. Garcia, RealClear Politics, last accessed, 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>95</sup> "Parties look to boost Rivera, Garcia in Florida," John McArdle, Roll Call, 4/27/2010

<sup>96</sup> "South Florida congressional race," Elysa Batista, Naples Daily News, 4/29/2010

<sup>97</sup> "Sender of political attack mailers says he was conned," Carrie Wells, Miami Herald, 7/28/2010

<sup>98</sup> "Rivera, Garcia debate again – on Spanish radio," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/12/2010

In an ad attacking Garcia, Rivera said Garcia “raised rates” on utilities while serving on the Florida Public Service Commission in February 1997.<sup>99</sup> During that time the Commission approved a rate hike for Florida Power of \$88 million, but Politifact fact checked the claim and rated it false—the vote Garcia took that the Rivera campaign claimed was for the hike was not for the rate hike but for another issue.<sup>100</sup>

### **Lawsuits/Actions Against Rivera**

In October 2010, The Miami Herald allies of the Joe Garcia campaign filed a lawsuit against Rivera because he failed to properly file annual reports (at all) about his finances about his Puerto Rican consulting firm. In one instance, he claimed to have received work from USAID, but the agency had no record of conducting business with Rivera’s firm.<sup>101</sup> A judge dismissed the lawsuit and the Garcia campaign said in a press release that Rivera won because of “technicalities.”<sup>102</sup>

In May 2011, the FEC cleared Rivera of allegations that his campaign coordinated with an independent political committee.<sup>103</sup>

### **Garcia Accused of Giving Subcontracts to Friends and Donors**

In October 2010, Republicans accused Joe Garcia of using his position in Obama’s Energy Department to issue subcontracts to MasTec, Inc., owned by his friend and campaign donor. The Energy Department and the contractor that hired MasTec denied that Garcia was involved with the process.<sup>104</sup>

## 2012 CAMPAIGN FOR FLORIDA’S 26<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### **Overview**

In 2012, challenger Joe Garcia won against incumbent Rep. David Rivera. Garcia won 53.6% to 43.0%.<sup>105</sup>

### **Garcia’s Campaign Message Against Corruption/Rep. Rivera**

On June 15, 2012, the Associated Press reported that “Democrat Joe Garcia seized on Rivera’s ethical issues in a video announcing his bid to unseat the Republican.”<sup>106</sup> The AP quoted Garcia’s announcement video: “Our community is being neglected because our congressman is busier working on his legal defense and covering up his lies than serving his constituents,” Garcia said. “We can’t sit by on the sidelines and watch this happen any longer. We will work hard to serve you with integrity and honesty.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> “David Rivera wrong about Joe Garcia’s vote on utility rates,” Trenton Daniel, St. Petersburg Times, 10/14/2010

<sup>100</sup> “David Rivera wrong about Joe Garcia’s vote on utility rates,” Trenton Daniel, St. Petersburg Times, 10/14/2010

<sup>101</sup> “Rivera’s Puerto Rico firm’s records unclear,” Scott Hiaasen, Patricia Mazzei, and Omayra Sosa Pascual, Miami Herald, 10/27/2010

<sup>102</sup> “Judge throws out case against Rivera,” Scott Hiaasen, Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/27/2010

<sup>103</sup> “FEC clears Fla. US Rep. Rivera in campaign probe,” Associated Press, 5/20/2011

<sup>104</sup> “Miami US House candidate questioned over income,” Laura Wides-Munoz, Associated Press, 10/27/2010

<sup>105</sup> [Florida 26<sup>th</sup> District – Rivera vs. Garcia, RealClear Politics, last accessed, 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>106</sup> “Ethics problems lose edge as re-election issue,” Donna Cassata, Associated Press, 6/15/2012

<sup>107</sup> “Ethics problems lose edge as re-election issue,” Donna Cassata, Associated Press, 6/15/2012

On August 15, 2012, the Frontrunner reported that in Garcia's primary election victory speech, Garcia said that "it's time to turn the page and leave these scandals behind."<sup>108</sup>

On September 2, 2012, the Key West Citizen profiled Garcia. Citizen wrote Garcia "has described the race between himself and Rivera as a question of 'who can voters trust and who has broken the public trust.'"<sup>109</sup> The Citizen went on to quote Garcia:

"The Florida Keys is by far the most beautiful part of the district and I want to serve you every day in Congress," Garcia said. "This means being honest and forthright. I will have fulltime staff based in the Keys and will personally hold monthly "open house" office hours throughout the Keys. Working together to create jobs, lowering property insurance, securing wastewater system funds or protecting our shores from drilling I know that we can accomplish great things. **Our community has been embarrassed by politicians who have broken the public trust, now it is time to move forward in a positive way.**"<sup>110</sup> (Emphasis added)

On September 25, 2012, NPR quoted Joe Garcia at a Miami fundraiser about allegations that opponent-Representative David Rivera was being investigated for misuse of campaign funds by spending thousands of dollars on campaign mailers on behalf of Democratic candidate Justin Lamar Sternad, a Democratic primary rival of Garcia's.<sup>111</sup> According to NPR, the FBI was examining envelopes that held the cash for the mailers to see if fingerprints could be lifted. Garcia said, "Almost \$50,000 of cash were distributed. And now, the FBI is dusting for fingerprints. You know, let him explain it. Right now, we have a history of telling the truth, being straight and honest with folks and talking about the issues that matter."<sup>112</sup>

On September 26, 2012, The Frontrunner reported that Garcia had complained to news outlets that Sternad was a fake candidate propped up by Rep. Rivera.<sup>113</sup>

On October 22, 2012, the Washington Examiner ran an article on David Rivera and federal investigation surrounding him. The author described Garcia's reaction to Rivera news:

Democratic nominee Garcia is pretty pleased with the developments, but he plays coy. "I figure when you say, 'My opponent has an empanelled grand jury investigating him,' " Garcia told me over piping-hot pork rinds in Miami last week, "I think enough is said."<sup>114</sup>

In an October 23, 2012 Washington Post article, Garcia said of Rivera, "I don't know what goes through his mind, I don't even know what took him to do this. It defies logic. But he is the guy in the race and to be quite honest, his name is going to be on the ballot, so they can't put someone else, so I assume he's got to walk it through."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "FL26: Garcia wins primary, seeks to use ethics issues to unseat Rivera," The Frontrunner, 8/15/2012 (Note that the Frontrunner attributes the content and quote to The Miami Herald, 8/15/12; we could not find the Herald article in our Nexis search).

<sup>109</sup> "Race pits incumbent against veteran," John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>110</sup> "Race pits incumbent against veteran," John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>111</sup> "Investigation dims GOP's hopes for holding on to house seat in Fla.," Greg Allen, NPR (All Things Considered), 9/25/2012

<sup>112</sup> "Investigation dims GOP's hopes for holding on to house seat in Fla.," Greg Allen, NPR (All Things Considered), 9/25/2012

<sup>113</sup> "FL26: Garcia primary foe reportedly tells FBI Rivera funded his run," The Frontrunner, 9/26/2012 (Note that the Frontrunner attributes the content and quote to The Miami Herald, 9/26/12; we could not find the Herald article in our Nexis search). Also, "FBI checks envelopes used in probe of Rep. David Rivera," Marc Caputo and Manny Garcia, Miami Herald, 9/21/2012

<sup>114</sup> "In Florida race, Republicans shun GOP incumbent," Timothy P. Carney, The Examiner (Washington, D.C.), 10/22/2012

<sup>115</sup> "Fla. Probe echoes D.C. scandal," Ed O'Keefe, Washington Post, 10/23/2012

On October 24, 2012, The Associated Press reported that Garcia's campaign had issued a statement about Rivera's ethics charges, saying it was "embarrassing to our entire community" and that on November 6<sup>th</sup> the district could "turn the page on Mr. Rivera's scandals."<sup>116</sup>

On October 25, 2012, The New York Times published an article that described the campaign: "Recently, [Rivera] ran a television advertisement saying, inaccurately, that Mr. Garcia was 'under investigation for breaking the law.' Last week, Mr. Garcia counterpunched, starting a Web site, davidriverafacts.com, delineating the accusations. An accompanying video warns: 'The more we know, the worse it gets.'"<sup>117</sup>

### **Garcia Does Not Live in District 26**

On July 24, 2012, the Miami Herald reported that Joe Garcia did not live in Florida's 26<sup>th</sup> district, but that "he said he has lived and worked there and would move to there if elected."<sup>118</sup>

### **Primary Candidate Gloria Romero Roses Attacks Garcia for Raising Utility Rates**

On August 13, 2012, The Tampa Bay Times published a Politifact on Democratic candidate Roses' claim that "trading on his [Garcia's] cozy relationship with energy lobbyists to raise tens of thousands of dollars for his failed campaigns—after he voted to raise our utility rates." Politifact rated the claim that Garcia raised utility rates as "half true."<sup>119</sup> Politifact ruled that Garcia did take votes in favor of utility rate hikes while on the Public Service Commission (1994-2000), however some the increases "contain caveats—for example, they were limited to only part of the state or certain customers."<sup>120</sup>

The Garcia campaign argued that because Garcia voted in favor of a billion dollar settlement for FPL consumers, any hike increase from other votes became a wash. Politifact wrote "Whether all of Garcia's votes for increases or decreases add up to on average less or more for a consumer could vary depending on where that consumer lived at the time."<sup>121</sup>

### **Garcia's Campaign Goals/Promises**

In September 2012, The Key West Citizen reported that one of his priorities was to lower property insurance.<sup>122</sup> He also said:

The Florida Keys is by far the most beautiful part of the district and I want to serve you every day in Congress. This means being honest and forthright. I will have fulltime staff based in the Keys and will personally hold monthly "open house" office hours throughout the Keys. Working together to create jobs, lowering property insurance, securing wastewater system funds or protecting our shores from drilling I know that we can accomplish great things.<sup>123</sup>

In October 2012, The Tampa Bay Times' The Buzz reported that Joe Garcia released a bipartisan message, with an ad of him saying, "In Congress, I'll work with both parties."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> "Florida ethics panel confirms Rivera accusations," Bill Kaczor, Associated Press, 10/24/2012

<sup>117</sup> "Politics can be a dirty business. And then there are House races in Florida..." Lizette Alvarez, New York Times, 10/25/2012

<sup>118</sup> "Dems rip Rep. David Rivera—then each other," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 7/24/2012

<sup>119</sup> "Gloria Romero Roses says Congressional Candidate Joe Garcia 'voted to raise our utility rates,'" Amy Sherman, Tampa Bay Time, 8/13/2012

<sup>120</sup> "Gloria Romero Roses says Congressional Candidate Joe Garcia 'voted to raise our utility rates,'" Amy Sherman, Tampa Bay Time, 8/13/2012

<sup>121</sup> "Gloria Romero Roses says Congressional Candidate Joe Garcia 'voted to raise our utility rates,'" Amy Sherman, Tampa Bay Time, 8/13/2012

<sup>122</sup> "Race pits incumbent against veteran," John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>123</sup> "Race pits incumbent against veteran," John Desantis, Key West Citizen, 9/2/2012.

<sup>124</sup> "In 2012 race for Congress, rage is out, solutions are in (even if it's just a good ad slogan)," Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 10/6/2012.

## Republican Past

On June 29, 2012, The Miami Herald described Garcia as the former executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation who went from “conservative exile leader to liberal Democrat.”<sup>125</sup>

### 2014 CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN FL-26

Rep. Joe Garcia lost his House seat to Republican challenger Carlos Curbelo in November 2014. Curbelo won the district 51.5% to 48.5%.<sup>126</sup>

### FRAUDULENT ABSENTEE BALLOT ISSUE

On May 31, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Rep. Joe Garcia’s chief of staff, Jeffrey Garcia, abruptly resigned from his post in Joe Garcia’s office.<sup>127</sup> The Herald called Jeffrey Garcia Joe Garcia’s “top political strategist” and wrote that Jeff Garcia took responsibility for the plot to manipulate the 2012 primary elections “by submitting hundreds of fraudulent absentee-ballot requests.” None of the requests were filled because they were flagged as suspicious.<sup>128</sup> According to state law, only voters themselves or their immediate family can request absentee ballots (Jeff Garcia eventually pled guilty to submitting absentee ballot requests online—all requests were done without knowledge of the voter).<sup>129</sup>

The police raided Jeff Garcia’s home and served search warrants for the homes of Joe Garcia’s communications director, Giancarlo Sopo, and his 2012 campaign manager, John Estes.<sup>130</sup> According to the Herald another search warrant was executed, but unclear to where.<sup>131</sup> A later, September *Miami Herald* article reported raids at the homes of Jeffrey Garcia, John Estes and Sopo’s cousin.<sup>132</sup>

Sopo was paid \$12,744 for his work as communication director between Jan. 17, 2013 through March 31, 2013. Sopo’s company, GS Strategies, received \$33,450 in 2010 by the Garcia campaign. Sopo was not paid in 2012 by Garcia’s campaign, although he did work for the campaign. According to the Miami Herald, Joe Garcia did not know why Sopo was not paid directly by the campaign and the Sopo’s absence on payroll is “part of what we have to figure out.”<sup>133</sup>

Garcia’s campaign paid Estes \$44,395 in 2012 through Estes’ company, Estes Consulting. The Florida Democratic Party paid Estes \$5,770 between 2010 and 2011.<sup>134</sup>

In response to the police warrants, the Herald reported Garcia’s response:

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<sup>125</sup> “Enrique Santos: The surprising evolution of a Latin shock jock,” Jordan Levin, Miami Herald, 6/29/2012

<sup>126</sup> [Florida 26<sup>th</sup> District – Curbelo vs. Garcia, RealClear Politics, last accessed 1/4/2016](#)

<sup>127</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

<sup>128</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

<sup>129</sup> “Miami congressman’s former aide convicted in absentee-ballot case released from jail,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 1/3/2014

<sup>130</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

<sup>131</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia stands by staffer implicated in Miami-Dade absentee ballot investigation,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/3/2013

<sup>132</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013

<sup>133</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia stands by staffer implicated in Miami-Dade absentee ballot investigation,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/3/2013

<sup>134</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

"I'm shocked and disappointed about this," Garcia, who said he was unaware of the scheme, told The Miami Herald. "This is something that hit me from left field. Until today, I had no earthly idea this was going on."

....

Joe Garcia said he would likely put Sopo on administrative leave for the time being.

....

Congressman Garcia said he will hire Coral Gables attorney William Barzee, a longtime campaign contributor, to investigate the phantom-ballot scheme internally and cooperate with prosecutors.<sup>135</sup>

On June 1, 2013, CNN reported that Rep. Garcia held a press conference about the incident, where he said:

"I've asked an attorney to investigate what went on and interview the people. I have asked all of my staff to fully cooperate with any investigation. . . Here's the good part about this - from my conversations thus far, no ballots were tampered with, no ballots were touched.

"I believe that while this was an ill-conceived effort," he continued, "it was meant to expand voter access."<sup>136</sup>

The Miami Herald reported that at his press conference, Rep. Garcia said, "I cannot stress how angry I am at these events."<sup>137</sup> When asked to explain how his campaign could be involved, Garcia said, "I explain it with the reckless abandon that we play politics in South Florida. . . It shouldn't be that way." Garcia also said at the presser, "If I'm upset, they [the voters] must be even more upset. . . I hope they give us an opportunity to explain this."<sup>138</sup>

On June 3, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Rep. Garcia placed Sopo on administrative leave. Rep. Garcia said about Sopo, "He said he did not do that, and I take him at his word. . . If I find that's not the case, he's not going to be put on administrative leave -- he's going to be let go. Until that happens, I am neither the prosecutor nor the judge and jury."<sup>139</sup>

On June 8, 2013, The Miami Herald wrote on Joe Garcia-Jeffrey Garcia relationship, claiming both men "were friends for more than a decade, graduates of the same alma mater, brought closer by two hard-fought campaigns. And friends stick together."<sup>140</sup> Joe Garcia told the Herald of the conversation when Joe Garcia fired Jeff Garcia over the allegations, "I couldn't see straight...He's a huge loss for me, as a friend and as an adviser."

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<sup>135</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia's chief of staff implicated in phantom absentee-ballot requests scheme," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 5/31/2013

<sup>136</sup> "Congressman denies involvement in staffer's alleged vote fraud attempt," Gregory Wallace, CNN Wire, 6/1/2013

<sup>137</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia: 'Flawed' absentee-voting system, 'reckless abandon' in politics contributed to ballot scandal," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/1/2013

<sup>138</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia: 'Flawed' absentee-voting system, 'reckless abandon' in politics contributed to ballot scandal," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/1/2013

<sup>139</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia stands by staffer implicated in Miami-Dade absentee ballot investigation," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/3/2013

<sup>140</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia's disgraced chief of staff has longstanding ties to the Miami congressman," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald,

On June 15, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Garcia said of the absentee voter fraud and the link to his office, "I didn't know any of this was happening and when I found out, I fixed it...But there are serious problems with absentee ballots in our election system, and that should be fixed too."<sup>141</sup>

On June 21, 2013, Politico reported that Republicans had begun airing radio spots calling for Joe Garcia's resignation. Joe Garcia said in response, "They want to start spending money a good year and a half before the election; they're welcome to do it. . . What we did is we found something wrong, we corrected it. That's what we do ... I have addressed the problem and we move on."<sup>142</sup> In the same story, Annette Taddeo was quoted as defending Garcia, saying he "has done nothing wrong" and that "the problem with the Republican Party is that the house is made of glass. They are worse."<sup>143</sup>

On July 27, 2013, The Florida Keys Keynoter reported that Garcia "won't let negative press get in the way of doing his job for his constituents." Rep. Garcia said of the negative press, "It's not distracting at all. We dealt with everything and explained it and moved forward and that's all we can do. Obviously people need something to talk about." At the time, Garcia said that the internal investigation his office conducted was almost complete.<sup>144</sup> He elaborated:

"Our investigation is going to be relatively limited because I don't think a lot of people talking to the state attorney or under the state attorneys scrutiny are about to sit down with my private attorney to do this. But everybody as far as I understand has been up front and has dealt with this issue," Garcia said.<sup>145</sup>

On September 30, 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia released his own internal review of the absentee ballot fraud allegations. The audit was conducted by Brian Tannebaum, an attorney and political contributor to Joe Garcia. Jeff Garcia and Giancarlo Sopo (who had at that point resigned from his position as Communications Director) declined to participate in the internal review and Tannebaum "did not review any documents."<sup>146</sup> Originally, Joe Garcia wanted William Barzee to conduct the internal investigation. Barzee was a "political supporter" to Joe Garcia.<sup>147</sup>

Tannebaum said of his report, "I could find no evidence that anyone else knew of or participated in any illegality regarding absentee ballots." Rep. Garcia said, "The report speaks for itself. The moment I was informed of the situation, I took action. Our current congressional staff had no knowledge of any wrongdoings."<sup>148</sup> In the Tannebaum report, Joe Garcia said that during the campaign voters would come to his campaign office and ask that someone from the campaign fill in their absentee ballots and that the campaign staff was instructed to say that they could not fill in the absentee ballots.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> "Online ballot fraud marks the 'e-boletera era of Miami politics,'" Marc Caputo and Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/15/2013

<sup>142</sup> "Fla. Scandal a headache for Garcia," Politico.com, 6/21/2013

<sup>143</sup> "Fla. Scandal a headache for Garcia," Politico.com, 6/21/2013

<sup>144</sup> "Keys congressman weighs in on controversies," Ryan McCarthy, Florida Keys Keynoter, 7/27/2013

<sup>145</sup> "Keys congressman weighs in on controversies," Ryan McCarthy, Florida Keys Keynoter, 7/27/2013

<sup>146</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013; "Garcia clears remaining staff in ballot scandal," Sarah Mimms, Hotline, 10/1/2013

<sup>147</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013

<sup>148</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013

<sup>149</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013

On October 1, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Jeff Garcia and Giancarlo Sopo were officially “under criminal investigation for allegedly submitting phony absentee-ballot requests.”<sup>150</sup>

On October 17, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Rep. Garcia paid Jeff Garcia “\$25,000 for consulting work months after he was fired” and “months after he received another eye-catching sum: a \$25,000 ‘campaign win bonus’ that Republicans suggested was ‘hush money.’”<sup>151</sup> According to Raul Martinez Jr., Rep. Garcia’s new chief of staff, the \$25,000 September 13<sup>th</sup> payment for consulting services “were outstanding invoices and we had to honor them. This invoice was for services between January 2013 and May 2013. It was reviewed by our attorney and our campaign treasurer.” According to the Herald, who interviewed a campaign finance attorney, Rep. Garcia could have possibly (depending on the contract used) put off paying the invoice, listing it as a “pending obligation.”

On October 20, 2013, Jeffrey Garcia reached a plea deal with the Miami-Dade state attorney’s office for the absentee ballot fraud case. According to the deal, Garcia would plead guilty to requesting absentee ballots on behalf of voters and spend 90 days in jail followed by 18 months of probation, including three months of house arrest. Jeff Garcia admitted that he directed John Estes and Giancarlo Sopo to request about 1,800 absentee ballots.<sup>152</sup> According to Sopo, his cousin, sister and friends put in the information (compiled by Jeff Garcia) because Jeff Garcia needed people to do the work.<sup>153</sup>

After one of Jeff Garcia’s October 2013 court appearances, Joe Garcia sent a written statement:

"It is painful to watch a friend go through this very difficult ordeal. . . As we all move past this investigation it must be noted that while these actions were wrong, no ballots were touched or manipulated in any way, and no voter had their votes interfered with or impeded in any way."<sup>154</sup>

On December 25, 2013, Jeff Garcia was released from jail, after serving 65 out of the 90 days sentence imposed on him.<sup>155</sup>

In an October 2014 debate with challenger Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Joe Garcia said of the absentee ballot scandal, “Let’s be clear: We found an error in our campaign. We parted ways with that person. We opened up to the investigation, and the prosecution found we were not involved in anything.” The Miami Herald noted that it was not Garcia or his office that “found” the error, rather it was investigators who were re-examining accusations of voter ballot fraud.<sup>156</sup>

#### JOSE ROLANDO “ROLY” ARROJO

In June 2013, The Miami Herald reported that during the 2010 race it wrote that Arrojo was a tea-party candidate suspected of being a “ringer” and had deep ties with Jeffrey Garcia.<sup>157</sup> The Herald claimed

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<sup>150</sup> “FL: 26 Garcia says no other staff members were aware of ballot scheme,” [The Fronrunner, 10/1/2013 \(Fronrunner is quoting Miami Herald article, 10/1/2013, which did not appear in our Lexis search\).](#)

<sup>151</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia pays \$25,000 consulting tab from past adviser amid federal investigation,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/17/2013

<sup>152</sup> “Ex-aide to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia to head to jail in absentee-ballot case,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/20/2013; “Jeffrey Garcia, ex-aide to Rep. Joe Garcia, pleads guilty, will serve 90 days in jail,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/21/2013

<sup>153</sup> “Ex-aide to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia to head to jail in absentee-ballot case,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/20/2013

<sup>154</sup> “Ex-aide to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia to head to jail in absentee-ballot case,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/20/2013

<sup>155</sup> “Miami congressman’s former aide convicted in absentee-ballot case released from jail,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 1/3/2014

<sup>156</sup> “Statute of limitations extended in cases of 2 former aides to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/24/2014

<sup>157</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia’s disgraced chief of staff has longstanding ties to the Miami congressman,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald,

that Arrojo and Jeff Garcia both went to Belen Jesuit Preparatory School and owned a “failed real-estate investment firm together” and that Rep. Joe Garcia “said he didn’t know Arrojo.”<sup>158</sup>

On June 12, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that the campaigns of Joe Garcia and Jose Arrojo used the same print shop for their campaign mailers.<sup>159</sup> In the same article, the Herald reported that Joe Garcia “met Friday for about two hours with state prosecutors” about the absentee ballot scheme. About Arrojo, Rep. Joe Garcia said at the time, “I was told Arrojo was a tea party candidate, and there were lots of those in 2010.... I didn’t know Arrojo then and I don’t know him now...In 2010, things were coming fast and furious, and I didn’t focus much on him anyway.” According to the Herald, Joe Garcia also admitted that Jeff Garcia had told him about his “one-time ties to Arrojo during the campaign.”

On September 9, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Jeff Garcia was under FBI investigation for “his ties to a phony Tea Party candidate’s secretly funded mail campaign.”<sup>160</sup> After years of denying that he was connected with the Arrojo campaign, a 2010 Garcia consultant, Michael Kaplan of Dynamic Strategies, told the FBI that Jeff Garcia was behind the Arrojo mailers. According to the Herald, the cost of entering the race and producing and delivering the mailers was “well over” \$20,000, which Arrojo was unlikely to afford on his own because he was a stay-at-home dad who had IRS liens against him and was going through bankruptcy at the time.<sup>161</sup> When the Herald contacted Joe Garcia about the FBI investigation into Jeff Garcia and Arrojo, Joe Garcia’s chief of staff said, “Congressman Garcia has not been contacted by the FBI, so this is the first he hears of this. And as he has previously stated, he does not know Mr. Arrojo. . . Mr. Garcia stands fully ready to cooperate with authorities.”<sup>162</sup>

In September 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Joe Garcia, when releasing the internal investigation results to the absentee ballot case, said that he would not launch another internal investigation into the Arrojo controversy because his current staff did not work on the 2010 campaign.<sup>163</sup>

On September 3, 2014, The Miami Herald reported that Rep. Garcia’s campaign had hired a criminal defense attorney. According to the attorney, David O. Markus, “Congressman Garcia has done nothing wrong. We’ve never been told that he’s the target of any investigation. This is old news.”<sup>164</sup>

In October 2014, at a debate with challenger Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Garcia said of the Arrojo investigation, “We haven’t hidden anything, and we’ve been honest. Our story hasn’t changed because that’s precisely the story.” The Miami Herald wrote, “In prior interviews, Garcia has said he’s not worried about the federal investigation because he says he didn’t know about the supposed 2010 tea-party ringer candidate.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> “Lawyer of convicted Garcia rival wants FBI investigation of mystery 2010 candidate,” Marc Caputo and Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/4/2013

<sup>159</sup> “Mailer links mystery candidate to Rep. Joe Garcia camp,” Marc Caputo and Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 6/12/2013

<sup>160</sup> “Former congressional staffer under second investigation,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 9/9/2013

<sup>161</sup> “Former congressional staffer under second investigation,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 9/9/2013

<sup>162</sup> “Former congressional staffer under second investigation,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 9/9/2013

<sup>163</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia clears remaining staff in absentee ballot probe,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/30/2013

<sup>164</sup> “Feds intensify investigation on Rep. Joe Garcia’s former campaign manager,” Marc Caputo and Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 9/3/2014

<sup>165</sup> “Statute of limitations extended in cases of 2 former aides to Miami Rep. Joe Garcia,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/24/2014

On April 24, 2015, federal prosecutors charged Jeff Garcia with secretly financing the Arrojo campaign.<sup>166</sup> On April 29, 2015, Jeff Garcia pled not guilty to the prosecutors' charges of conspiracy to give a campaign contribution less than \$25,000, which was a misdemeanor.<sup>167</sup>

On June 10, 2015, the Miami Herald reported that court documents in Jeff Garcia's case suggested that Joe Garcia did know about the Arrojo candidacy. In an email sent to Joe Garcia, Jeff wrote, "If I got a Tea Party candidate in the race, that will improve your odds" and a week later, Jeff sent Joe another email saying "YOU WILL WIN IF...Tea Party Candidate (will happen)."<sup>168</sup> When the Miami Herald contacted Joe Garcia for a response, Garcia said, "I've been clear on this, and the emails are pretty clear."<sup>169</sup>

In September 2015, Jeff Garcia changed his plead to guilty and received a sentence of eight months of home confinement, two years of probation and to pay a fine of \$1,000. The judge said of Jeff Garcia that "this type of crime strikes at the very core of our democracy."<sup>170</sup>

## ATTACKS

### **Curbelo is a Lobbyist**

On August 26, 2014, The Miami Herald reported that Carlos Curbelo won the GOP primary and would face Rep. Joe Garcia in the general election. Curbelo was the principal at his public and media relations firm. Joe Garcia released a statement the night Curbelo won, calling Curbelo a "lobbyist who refuses to disclose his big-money clients and is only looking out for his own political interests."<sup>171</sup>

At an October 2014 debate with Curbelo, Garcia said to the audience, "Precisely who are Mr. Curbelo's clients? We don't know because he won't tell us. We don't know if he represents [the late Venezuelan President Hugo] Chávez's regime, because we can't see it."<sup>172</sup>

### **Scandal is an Embarrassment**

On October 10, 2014, Hotline reported that American Unity PAC released a TV ad that used a clip from a 2012 Garcia TV ad where Garcia denounced congressional corruption. The American Unity PAC ad attacks Garcia for being "just another hypocritical politician who doesn't deserve your vote."<sup>173</sup>

In an October 2014 debate hosted by Roberto Rodríguez Tejera, Curbelo was able to "choose" a topic to question Garcia about, and he chose elections fraud. Curbelo called on Garcia to apologize for the scandals involving his office and his failure to live up to his 2012 promise to be different from Rep. David Rivera. Garcia responded, "I don't owe anyone an apology. We've been clear about the errors that were committed."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> "Feds charge ex-congressional chief of staff with secretly funding 2010 ringer candidate," Patricia Mazzei and Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 4/24/2015

<sup>167</sup> "Ex-congressman's former chief of staff, suspected ringer candidate plead not guilty to election offenses," Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 4/29/2015

<sup>168</sup> "Court record shows ex-Rep. Joe Garcia may have known about 'shadow' candidate," Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 6/10/2015

<sup>169</sup> "Court record shows ex-Rep. Joe Garcia may have known about 'shadow' candidate," Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 6/10/2015

<sup>170</sup> "Ex-congressman's top aide gets probation, fine for breaking election law," Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 9/14/2015

<sup>171</sup> "Carlos Curbelo wins Miami GOP congressional primary," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 8/26/2014

<sup>172</sup> "Debate between Miami congressional candidates centers on ethics," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/14/2014

<sup>173</sup> "American Unity PAC hits Garcia on aide's ballot fraud," Alex Brown, The Hotline, 10/10/2014

<sup>174</sup> "Debate between Miami congressional candidates centers on ethics," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/14/2014

### **Garcia Takes from a Variety of SuperPACs**

During a September debate between Curbelo and Joe Garcia, Curbelo attacked Garcia for taking money from outside groups and PACs. Curbelo said, "I give the incumbent credit, he does not discriminate on campaign contributors. He takes money from Exxon Mobil's PACs and takes money from the most radical union PACs."<sup>175</sup>

### **Garcia's Relationship with Isaías Brothers and Family**

In March 2014, the New York Times reported on how close relatives of Ecuadorian exiles Roberto and William Isaías had donated thousands of dollars to political campaigns in the United States. The Isaías brothers, according to the Ecuadorian government, ran a bank that made loans to businesses they controlled. The bank presented fake balance sheets to the government to get more than \$400 million in bailout funds. The brothers fled to the United States. According to the New York Times, the brothers' wives and children made at least \$100,000 worth of political contributions to Congress members, including Joe Garcia.<sup>176</sup>

In October 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia's congressional challenger, Carlos Curbelo attacked Garcia for his ties to the Isaías brothers.<sup>177</sup> According to the Miami Herald:

Curbelo, for his part, has countered that Garcia violated House rules by doing the Isaías brothers' bidding, even though they aren't his constituents. The New York Times reported in March that Garcia made a phone call on the family's behalf.

Garcia has said it's "routine" for his office to assist many South Floridians who ask for immigration help -- though in this case, the brothers are also significant campaign donors.<sup>178</sup>

Curbelo also accused Garcia of trying to solicit business from the Isaías brothers in April 2011 for \$10,000. Garcia acknowledged that the brothers never hired them but that their family members contributed tens of thousands of dollars to his campaign<sup>179</sup> and that he made an immigration call on their behalf while serving in Congress.<sup>180</sup> According to the Herald:

"What it is, is unethical," Curbelo said. "You're only supposed to do constituent-service work for your constituents."

"That is completely untrue," Garcia said. "What we've done -- and we've done for everyone who come to us, whether you live in our district or not -- is represent them."

A few moments earlier, Garcia had said, "I represent 850,000 people in South Florida, that's it," referring to his district.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> "Joe Garcia, Carlos Curbelo spar in debate in Key West," Cammy Clark, Miami Herald, 9/24/2010

<sup>176</sup> "Fugitive bankers help finance a few U.S. campaigns Brothers wanted in Ecuador are big donors here," Frances Robles, New York Times, 3/14/2014

<sup>177</sup> "Loophole allows Miami candidate to keep firm clients secret," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/17/2014

<sup>178</sup> "Loophole allows Miami candidate to keep firm clients secret," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/17/2014

<sup>179</sup> "Miami congressional candidate Carlos Curbelo represented Ecuadorean fugitives," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/10/2014

<sup>180</sup> "Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Joe Garcia ratchet up attacks in debate," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/19/2014

<sup>181</sup> "Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Joe Garcia ratchet up attacks in debate," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/19/2014

Roberto Isaías said of his relationship with Garcia: "I visit Congress frequently," he said. "I'm probably more often spotted with Garcia than with Curbelo." Garcia himself concurred, saying, "I get Roberto Isaías meetings; he's a friend of mine."<sup>182</sup>

### **Garcia's Relationship with Bill Delahunt, Hugo Chavez Sympathizer**

In February 2014, The Miami Herald reported that Joe Garcia was criticized by Republicans for receiving and keeping a political contribution from lobbyist and former Representative Bill Delahunt. Delahunt, according to the Herald, had "personal relationships in the Venezuelan government"; he attended the funeral of Hugo Chavez and met with the current Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. At the time, violent protests were occurring in Venezuela between student protesters and Maduro's government.<sup>183</sup>

### **Garcia Attacked for Saying "Communism Works"**

On May 20, 2014, in a Google Hangout conference call on immigration,<sup>184</sup> Rep. Joe Garcia said:  
The safest city in America is El Paso, Texas. It happens to be across the border from the most dangerous city in the Americas, which is Juarez. Right?

Two of the safest cities in America, two of them are on the border with Mexico. And of course, the reason is, you know, we proved that communism works. If you give everybody a good government job, there's no crime. But that isn't what we should be doing.<sup>185</sup>

According to UPI, Garcia said his quote was taken out of context by the GOP, who released the video because they were on the call.<sup>186</sup> The conservative Hispanic group LIBRE launched a television ad campaign focused on Garcia's "communism works" comment. According to the Miami Herald, the remark was sardonic—Garcia was hitting on Republicans for spending money on border security and how that created jobs for local communities.<sup>187</sup>

## OTHER ISSUES

### **Rented Apartment in District**

On September 24, 2013, The Key West Citizen reported that Joe Garcia began renting a studio apartment in Key West to make good on a "campaign promise." The lease was for one year. At the time, Rep. Garcia owned another home in Miami, which is nearby his daughter. He also "has a residence" in Washington, D.C.<sup>188</sup>

### **TV Ad with Garcia and Mayor Accused of Campaign Finance Violations**

In May 2014, The Hotline reported that Patriot Majority USA had changed its TV ad that supported Rep. Joe Garcia. In the original ad, Garcia is shown with former Homestead, Florida Mayor Steve Bateman,

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<sup>182</sup> "Miami congressional candidate Carlos Curbelo represented Ecuadorean fugitives," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/10/2014

<sup>183</sup> "Challenger Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Joe Garcia trade jabs on ties to Venezuela, gambling," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 2/20/2014

<sup>184</sup> "Garcia should apolot

<sup>185</sup> "GOP super PAC claims Cuban congressman endorsed communism," Matt Bradwell, UPI.com, 5/21/2014

<sup>186</sup> "GOP super PAC claims Cuban congressman endorsed communism," Matt Bradwell, UPI.com, 5/21/2014

<sup>187</sup> "FL26: Conservative Hispanic group's ad hits Garcia over 'communism works' comment," [The Frontrunner, 6/4/2014 \(Note that Frontrunner quotes a Miami Herald article, 6/4/14, which did not show up in our Nexis search\)](#)

<sup>188</sup> "Garcia rents apartment in KW," Key West Citizen, 9/24/2013



who was charged with campaign finance violations. According to the Garcia campaign, the b-roll used in the original ad was on his campaign website and was shot “years ago.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> “Patriot Majority USA removes controversial mayor from Garcia ad,” Jack Fitzpatrick, The Hotline, 5/14/2014

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE

### CONTRIBUTIONS

#### NOTABLE CONTRIBUTORS

##### **Dr. Salomon Melegen**

On January 29, 2013, The Miami Herald reported that Dr. Salomon Melegen, an eye doctor and prominent political fundraiser, had his office raided by FBI agents for Medicare fraud. According to the Herald, Melegen contributed to the campaigns of “Sen. Bill Nelson and Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Joe Garcia, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Mario Diaz-Balart, among others.”<sup>190</sup>

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Melegen contributed \$19,600 to Joe Garcia between 2005 and 2015.<sup>191</sup>

##### **Claudio Osorio**

On April 9, 2013, The South Florida Business Journal reported that several prominent individuals, organizations and companies were returning money to the bankruptcy trustee of Claudio Osorio, who was facing prison time for fraud and money laundering charges related to his InnoVida companies. The Chapter 7 bankruptcy trustee for InnoVida, Soneet Kapila, was trying to collect contributions Osorio had made with his “ill-gotten money.” Osorio had made political contributions to several Democrats, including Joe Garcia for Congress. His contribution to the Garcia campaign was for \$10,200.<sup>192</sup>

In March 2014, the New York Times reported on how close relatives of Ecuadorian exiles Roberto and William Isaías had donated thousands of dollars to political campaigns in the United States. The Isaías brothers, according to the Ecuadorian government, ran a bank that made loans to businesses they controlled. The bank presented fake balance sheets to the government to get more than \$400 million in bailout funds. The brothers fled to the United States. According to the New York Times, the brothers’ wives and children made at least \$100,000 worth of political contributions to Congress members, including Joe Garcia.<sup>193</sup>

##### **GEO Group**

In 2014, the for-profit private prison operator, GEO Group, donated to Rep. Joe Garcia’s campaign.<sup>194</sup>

#### **Contributions from Dade Medical College:**

Committee	Donor	Employment	Date	Amount
Joe Garcia Congress	Ernesto Perez	CEO, Dade Medical College	6/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,600</a>

<sup>190</sup> “FBI wraps up raid at West Palm Beach office of doctor tied to U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez,” Carli Teproff, Marc Caputo and Jay Weaver, Miami Herald, 1/29/2013

<sup>191</sup> “Reid says Menendez ‘outstanding senator,’” Herb Jackson, Northjersey.com, 3/10/2015

<sup>192</sup> “Jorge Perez, Wasserman Schultz also return Osorio money,” Paul Brinkmann, South Florida Business Journal, 4/9/2013

<sup>193</sup> “Fugitive bankers help finance a few U.S. campaigns Brothers wanted in Ecuador are big donors here,” Frances Robles, New York Times, 3/14/2014

<sup>194</sup> “Profits from prisons: Geo Group has a lock on its businesses,” Nina Lincoff, South Florida Business Journal, 3/6/2015

Joe Garcia Congress	Ernesto Perez	CEO, Dade Medical College	6/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,600</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Ernesto Perez	CEO, Dade Medical College	8/4/2010	<a href="#">\$2,400</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Ernesto Perez	CEO, Dade Medical College	8/4/2010	<a href="#">\$2,400</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Ernesto Perez	CEO, Dade Medical College	9/30/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Sylvia Perez	Community Relations, Dade Medical College	6/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,600</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Sylvia Perez	Community Relations, Dade Medical College	6/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,600</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Raul Mendez	COO, Dade Medical College	9/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Raul Mendez	COO, Dade Medical College	9/27/2013	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Enrique Lopez	Dean of Continuing Education, Dade Medical College	10/15/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Justin Garcia	Controller, Dade Medical College	9/14/2012	<a href="#">\$1,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Elizabeth Martinez	VP Community Relations, Dade Medical College	9/14/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Sylvia Perez	Community Relations, Dade Medical College	9/30/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Enrique Lopez	Dean of Continuing Education, Dade Medical College	10/20/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>
Joe Garcia Congress	Raul Mendez	COO, Dade Medical College	10/31/2012	<a href="#">\$2,500</a>

# CONGRESS

## MEMBERSHIPS

### COMMITTEE HISTORY

While in Congress, Garcia served on the House Judiciary Committee and Natural Resources Committee.<sup>195</sup>

### CAUCUS HISTORY

According to his official website, Joe Garcia was a member of the following caucuses while in Congress<sup>196</sup>:

- Congressional Hispanic Caucus
- Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, Vice Chair
- New Democrat Coalition
- NoLabels Problem Solvers
- United Solutions Caucus
- Congressional Veterans' Jobs Caucus
- Congressional Everglades Caucus
- Florida Congressional Ports Caucus
- National Marine Sanctuary Caucus
- House Sugar Caucus
- Bipartisan Disaster Relief Caucus
- Democratic Israel Working Group
- Congressional Automotive Performance and Motorsports Caucus
- Congressional Boating Caucus
- Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus
- Congressional Diabetes Caucus
- Congressional Fire Services Caucus
- Congressional Task force on Alzheimer's Disease
- Congressional Foster Youth Caucus
- Congressional Arts Caucus
- Congressional STEAM Caucus
- Bipartisan Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Caucus

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<sup>195</sup> [Committees and Subcommittees, Congressman Joe Garcia website \(via webarchive\), last accessed 1/13/2016](#)

<sup>196</sup> [Committees and Subcommittees, Congressman Joe Garcia website \(via webarchive\), last accessed 1/13/2016](#)

## PERKS

### TRAVEL

#### **Rep. Joe Garcia Goes to Israel**

In August 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia's office announced that Garcia, along with 30 other House members, would visit Israel as a guest of the American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF), described as a non-profit organization.<sup>197</sup> According to the Tampa Bay Times, the AIEF is "in fact, an arm of the lobbying group American Israel Public Affairs Committee." Lobbying groups had previously been banned from paying for trips for lawmakers, but an exception was made for "educational foundations."<sup>198</sup>

According to the Tampa Bay Times, casino mogul Sheldon Adelson was a major donor to AIEF.<sup>199</sup>

#### **Rep. Joe Garcia Visits Colombia**

In August 2013, Rep. Garcia announced that he would visit Colombia "to discuss several economic and cultural issues." In his press release, he was scheduled to meet with the Association of Colombian Flower Exporters, the Colombian Chamber of Commerce and the seaport and airport of Cartagena. In his press release, he said that he was a "longtime supporter of the Colombian Free Trade Agreement."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia visits Israel to learn more about critical issues affecting the two nations," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/7/2013

<sup>198</sup> "Florida Reps. Frankel, Murphy join trip to Israel that raises questions of influence," Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 8/6/2013

<sup>199</sup> "Florida Reps. Frankel, Murphy join trip to Israel that raises questions of influence," Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 8/6/2013

<sup>200</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia will visit Colombia to discuss imperative matters impacting both countries," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/14/2013

# ISSUES

## AGRICULTURE

### SOUTH DADE AGRICULTURE

#### **Old Quote of Garcia Saying Farmers Don't Matter**

In October 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia hosted U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, in the district for a discussion with over 100 members of the South Dade agricultural community.<sup>201</sup> The same day that Vilsack visited the district, the a GOP group released a statement that included a link from a 2008 interview of Garcia saying, "People don't have the courage to say look a bunch of farmers shouldn't get to pick the next President of the United States."<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia hosts discussion with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack and South Dade farmers," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 10/2/2014

<sup>202</sup> "Joe Garcia says farmers don't matter," Missouri Republican Party Press Release, 10/2/2014

## BUDGET

### BUDGET/APPROPRIATION BILLS

According to his 2013 CQ Member Profile, Rep. Joe Garcia “rejected budgets put forth by Senate Democrats and House Democrats.”<sup>203</sup>

### RYAN BUDGET

#### VOTES

##### ***Garcia Voted Against CBC Substitute Amendment to Ryan Budget***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against a substitute amendment that would provide for \$3.443 trillion in new budget authority in fiscal 2015, not including off-budget accounts. It would call for an additional \$500 billion over the first three years for infrastructure and jobs programs, including \$230 billion for infrastructure repairs; \$100 billion for a national direct job creation program; \$50 billion for school modernization; \$50 billion to fund teacher, law enforcement and first responder jobs; \$50 billion to rebuild neighborhoods; \$13 billion for job training and \$7 billion for summer jobs. It also would call for \$388 billion increase in funding for anti-poverty programs such as the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program and extending unemployment insurance. It also would recommend raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour and assume repeal of the automatic spending cuts under the sequester. To pay for the spending increases, it would recommend a number of revenue increases including lowering tax deductions and eliminating tax breaks for corporations and wealthy Americans and a number of policy changes such as adding a public option to health insurance exchanges, passing comprehensive immigration overhaul and ending spending from the Defense Department's Overseas Contingency Operations account.

[H. Con. Res. 96, Vote #172, 4/9/2014; D: 116-76; R: 0-224]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll172.xml>

##### ***Garcia Voted Against Van Hollen Substitute Amendment to Ryan Budget***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against a substitute amendment that would provide for \$3.078 trillion in new budget authority in fiscal 2015, not including off-budget accounts. The plan would call for repealing the sequester, including cuts to Medicare. It also would propose eliminating the non-defense discretionary sequester starting in 2016. The substitute would assume an increase of the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour and enactment of the Senate-passed immigration overhaul. It would propose extending expired unemployment benefits for one year and extending the tax credits from the 2012 extension of Bush-era income and other tax cuts due to expire at the end of 2017. It would assume implementation of the 2010 health care overhaul and assume increases in physician fees for primary care services under Medicaid. It would accommodate deficit-neutral legislation to permanently address the Medicare physician reimbursement rate issue known as the "doc fix." The plan would propose expanding tax incentives aimed at encouraging low- and middle-income taxpayers to attend college and

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<sup>203</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia (D-Fla),” Member Profile, Congressional Quarterly, 12/6/2013

save for retirement. It would call on Congress to raise revenue by ending tax breaks for special interests and the very wealthy.

[H. Con. Res. 96, Vote #176, 4/10/2014; D: 163-31; R: 0-230]  
<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll176.xml>

## SEQUESTRATION

### **Referring to GOP as the Taliban**

During the October 2013 government shutdown, Rep. Joe Garcia went to the House floor to complain that Republicans were to blame for the shutdown of the federal government, calling the GOP “this extremist element, this Taliban.”<sup>204</sup> In his speech, he said that some Republicans wanted to vote on a “clean” continuing resolution but that they were scared and “unfortunately they’ve been taken hostage by extremist elements in their party....We just need our colleagues to step up, push aside these extremist elements, this Taliban.” After the GOP complained, Garcia said, “I’m not referring to any member. I was talking about extremism. If anyone is offended, I’m sorry.”<sup>205</sup>

### **Voting with GOP on Targeted Appropriations Bills During Shutdown**

On October 4, 2013, The Examiner reported that Rep. Joe Garcia was one of 16 Democrats who broke from their party to vote in favor of all six targeted appropriations bills offered by the GOP. The bills would have provided funding for certain departments during the 2013 federal government shutdown.<sup>206</sup>

## VOTES

### ***Garcia Voted Against Getting Rid of Automatic Sequester Cuts***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against a substitute amendment that would provide \$2.963 trillion in new budget authority for fiscal 2014, not including off-budget accounts. It would assume the replacement of the automatic spending cuts under the sequester with a combination of revenue increases and alternative spending cuts. It would assume \$100 billion in spending for infrastructure investments and worker training programs. The substitute would assume a \$240 billion reduction in defense spending, a \$142 billion reduction in non-defense discretionary spending, a \$275 billion decrease in health care spending and a \$76 billion reduction in spending for other mandatory programs. It also would assume that other domestic spending cuts would be achieved by selling excess government property, reducing improper or fraudulent payments, consolidating programs with similar missions, and leveraging buying power to achieve savings in federal employee benefits.

[H Con Res. 25, Vote #83; 3/20/2013; D: 154-35; R: 22-226]  
<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll083.xml>

### ***Garcia Voted Against Cutting War Spending and Ceasing Sequester Cuts***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against a substitute amendment that would provide \$3.325 trillion in new budget authority in fiscal 2014, not including off-budget accounts. It would assume cuts in war spending

<sup>204</sup> “Rep. Garcia’s ‘Taliban’ comment riles GOP,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/1/2013

<sup>205</sup> “Rep. Garcia’s ‘Taliban’ comment riles GOP,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/1/2013

<sup>206</sup> “57 Democrats join House GOP to fund key departments, programs,” Ashe Schow, The Examiner, 10/4/2013

and other savings to increase funding for domestic activities. It would call for \$230 billion for infrastructure repairs, \$100 billion for community restoration projects, \$50 billion for school renovation, \$50 billion to fund teacher, law enforcement and first responder jobs and \$41 billion over 10 years for a pay increase for federal workers. It also would assume spending increases of \$255 billion for transportation projects, \$240 billion for education programs, \$57 billion for community development and \$55 billion for low-income aid programs. It would assume repeal of the automatic spending cuts under the sequester. It also would call for the creation of a public insurance option within the health insurance exchanges and assume \$138 billion in spending to permanently address the Medicare reimbursement rate issue known as the "doc fix."

[H Con Res. 25, Vote #84, 3/20/2013; D: 105-80; R: 0-225]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll084.xml>

#### ***Garcia Voted Against Replacing Sequester Cuts with Different Cuts and Revenue Increases***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against a substitute amendment that would provide \$2.983 trillion in new budget authority for fiscal 2014, not including off-budget accounts. It would assume the replacement of the automatic spending cuts under the sequester, with a combination of revenue increases and spending cuts. It would assume \$80 billion in spending for education initiatives, \$50 billion for surface transportation projects, \$10 billion for a national infrastructure bank, \$5 billion to help states and localities hire police officers and firefighters and \$1 billion for a Veterans' Job Corps. It would call for \$141 billion in Medicare savings over 10 years through program efficiencies as well as \$73 billion in mandatory savings from cuts in agriculture direct payments, changes to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and cuts to duplicative federal programs. It would assume no funding for overseas contingency operations after fiscal 2014. It also would accommodate deficit-neutral legislation to permanently address the Medicare reimbursement rate issue known as the "doc fix."

[H Con Res. 25, Vote #87, 3/20/2013; D: 165-28; R: 0-225]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll087.xml>

#### DEBT

On January 23, 2013, Rep. Garcia voted against H.R. 325, a bill to suspend the debt ceiling until May.<sup>207</sup> Garcia's office issued a statement on his vote:

"This bill is the perfect example of why the American people are so frustrated with Congress. A short-term, temporary fix to the debt ceiling does not provide the certainty that the small businesses, financial markets, and our economy need so that we can continue on the path of recovery.

"It is time for Washington politicians to stop playing political games with America's economy. The people of South Florida sent me to Congress to solve problems and work to get America's fiscal house in order, not to punt the ball to our children's generation. We need a bipartisan path

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<sup>207</sup> "Congressman Garcia comments on today's debt ceiling vote," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 1/23/2013



forward that achieves real, lasting deficit reduction and promotes our economic growth and competitiveness.

"In the coming weeks, I will be working in a bipartisan manner to meet America's fiscal challenges and put our country on the path toward a balanced budget." <sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> "Congressman Garcia comments on today's debt ceiling vote," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 1/23/2013

## BUSINESS

### EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

#### **Export-Import Bank**

In June 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia expressed his support for the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, issuing a press release stating that it would be “irresponsible to push for the Ex-Im Bank's closure which will only hurt our economy and small businesses. Instead, we should be trying to find ways to support and strengthen the Ex-Im Bank's ability to create jobs and grow our economy.”<sup>209</sup> He wrote an op-ed in the Miami Herald urging Congress to reauthorize the program.<sup>210</sup>

### OTHER ISSUES

#### **Encouraged Major League Soccer Stadium in Homestead**

In June 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia sent a letter to Major League Soccer encouraging the organization to set up a team in Homestead. According to the British publication Daily Star, the team Garcia seeks is a Miami team that soccer star David Beckham was looking to launch. According to the Star, Beckham wanted to set up a team in Miami. The Star described Homestead as “one of Florida’s most remote outposts.”<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia issues statement on renewal of Export-Import Bank Charter,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 6/24/2014

<sup>210</sup> “Ex-Im Bank fuels Florida’s economy,” Joe Garcia, Miami Herald, 6/29/2014

<sup>211</sup> “Nick of time for Beck’s dream,” Mike Parker, Daily Star Sunday, 8/3/2014. [“Miami congressman: David Beckham should put his MLS stadium in Homestead,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald Blogs \(Naked Politics\), 6/7/2014](#)

## CONSUMER/WORKER PROTECTION

### MINIMUM WAGE

#### **Raising Minimum Wage to \$10.10 an Hour**

In an August 2014 press release, Rep. Joe Garcia said, "While we have made tremendous progress, there is still clearly more we can do to put the American Dream within reach of all our nation's workers. That is why I am a cosponsor and strong supporter of legislation that will boost the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour."<sup>212</sup>

### RESTRICTING LAWSUITS

#### **Patent Trolls**

In November 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia helped pass H.R. 3309, the Innovation Act, through the House Judiciary Committee. According to proponents, the bill would curb patent litigation abuse by including a fee-shifting provision.<sup>213</sup> According to Consumer Electronics Daily:

Twelve committee Democrats ended up voting for the final bill soon after the committee approved an amendment from Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., that would exempt the losing party in a patent lawsuit from paying the prevailing party's legal fees when the losing party demonstrates he had commenced legitimate legal action in good faith. The amendment passed 36-2 Conyers and Johnson voted against it.

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Rep. Joe Garcia, D-Fla., said the amendment was "better than the alternative" but noted that the bill remained an "overreach" and he hoped it would be subsequently fixed.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia visits workers on Labor Day," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/29/2014

<sup>213</sup> "House Judiciary Committee approves Innovation Act," Consumer Electronics Daily, 11/22/2013

<sup>214</sup> "House Judiciary Committee approves Innovation Act," Consumer Electronics Daily, 11/22/2013

## CUBA

### EMBARGO

#### **Favors U.S. Approval of Cuban Diabetes Treatment**

In October 2013, Rep. Garcia publicly supported a Havana research institution that wanted to gain approval by the U.S. government to test and market a diabetes treatment in the United States. Of the seven Cuban-American Congress members at the time, Rep. Garcia was the only one who supported the drug at the time. According to the Miami Herald:

Garcia's endorsement marks the first time a Cuban-American in Congress has overtly backed a measure that, in the eyes of critics, undermines the embargo and could eventually give the Castro government access to U.S. markets without making democratic reforms. The move splits the Cuban-American congressional delegation for the first time. . . .<sup>215</sup>

According to Garcia, his position was not political. He said:

This is about something that can maybe save lives. This is about medicine. There are 70,000 amputations that happen yearly from diabetes. I'm not going to be the guy who decides that people will suffer because of the embargo. . . . Let the people who want to talk politics go and talk politics. This is about a treatment that's designed to help Americans. And these are just tests. If it's a hoax, then someone's out a lot of money. But if the treatment works, why wouldn't we do this?"<sup>216</sup>

Garcia said he was lobbied by former Rep. Bill Delahunt (D-Mass) and former Gov. John Sununu (R- New Hampshire) on the issue. Delahunt is a lobbyist with Healiance Pharmaceutical, a New Jersey base company (parent company is Digen Pharmaceuticals). After meeting Delahunt and Sununu, Garcia circulated letters to gain support from other Congress members for the testing and marketing of the Cuban drug Herberprot-B, a diabetic foot ulcer treatment. The drug was developed, according to the Herald, "by an arm of the Castro government, Cuba's Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology."<sup>217</sup>

In an interview with the Associated Press, Rep. Garcia reiterated that he was pro-embargo even though he wanted approval of Herberprot-B. Garcia said:

I'm all for the embargo. I'm all for being against the Cuban regime. But what I'm not for is people suffering if they don't need to. Certainly not Americans. . . . This is something that's right. This is something that could benefit up to 70,000 Americans. I'm a member of the United States Congress and my job is to represent those folks.<sup>218</sup>

In October 2013, the Miami Herald reported that the lobbyist Delahunt had contributed \$2,500 to Rep. Garcia's campaign and that "days after recording the Sept. 19 contribution, Garcia quietly backed the drug-treatment effort by circulating an email to some other congressional members asking them to sign a letter backing U.S. tests, which need U.S. Treasury approval due to the Cuba embargo." Garcia's

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<sup>215</sup> "Rep. Garcia's push for Cuba drug trial tests support for embargo," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/7/2013

<sup>216</sup> "Rep. Garcia's push for Cuba drug trial tests support for embargo," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/7/2013

<sup>217</sup> "Rep. Garcia's push for Cuba drug trial tests support for embargo," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/7/2013

<sup>218</sup> "Garcia supports US testing of Cuban diabetes drug," Christine Armario, Associated Press, 10/8/2013

campaign responded that Delahunt is an old friend and supporter who even held a fundraiser for Garcia in 2008.<sup>219</sup>

In October 2014, during a debate with challenger Carlos Curbelo, Curbelo attacked Garcia for backing Herberprot-B trials in the United States. Garcia defended himself by saying that trials would have made money for the U.S., not that he backed the drug for use in the U.S. According to the Miami Herald, Garcia's defense in the debate was "not what the Democrat said last year in a letter to the Treasury Department that noted "the lack of access to an effective treatment for this life-threatening condition, which afflicts millions Americans and results in billions of dollars of direct medical costs."<sup>220</sup>

#### TRAVEL BAN

##### **Cuban Diplomats Visit Key West Controversy**

In October 2013, controversy ensued in Key West when the Key West city commissioners unanimously passed a resolution inviting two Cuban diplomats to the San Carlos Institute in Key West. According to the Miami Herald, the resolution "was met with outrage by some near the northern end of Garcia's district, in Miami-Dade" and three Cuban-American House members wrote a letter to the U.S. Department of State urging it to block the Cuban diplomats from visiting Washington D.C. Garcia did not sign the letter.<sup>221</sup>

Garcia said that in conversations he had with the State Department, the visit by Cuban diplomats would have led to "reciprocity" – that certain U.S. diplomats in Cuba would be allowed more travel within Cuba, and therefore could help dissidents. "I'm willing to bet no one's going to become communists in Key West. But I do know dissidents need assistance in Cuba. . . These people have no sustenance. They are literally living at the tip of the most repressive regime in the hemisphere," Garcia said.<sup>222</sup>

According to an op-ed in the Miami Herald, the board of the San Carlos Institute distributed an open letter that said, "It is shameful that anyone in the Key West business community would extend a welcome mat or shake the bloody hands of Castro's representatives."<sup>223</sup>

The diplomats cancelled the trip.<sup>224</sup>

#### OTHER

##### **Oil Drilling in Cuba**

On April 28, 2013, The Key West Citizen reported that Rep. Joe Garcia "wants to grant waivers to U.S. oil companies to drill in Cuba," which was a stance contrary to Sen. Bill Nelson. Nelson wanted to make it harder for oil companies to drill in Cuba and the U.S., therefore keeping them from drilling in Cuba at all.<sup>225</sup> Garcia said:

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<sup>219</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia pays \$25,000 consulting tab from past adviser amid federal investigation," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/17/2013

<sup>220</sup> "Debate between Miami congressional candidates centers on ethics," Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/14/2014

<sup>221</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia, district are at center of Cuba clashes, policy changes," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/13/2013

<sup>222</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia, district are at center of Cuba clashes, policy changes," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/13/2013

<sup>223</sup> "Fabiola Santiago: Dalliance with Cuba a bad deal for Key West," Fabiola Santiago, Miami Herald, 10/15/2013

<sup>224</sup> "Rep. Joe Garcia, district are at center of Cuba clashes, policy changes," Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/13/2013

<sup>225</sup> "Congressman reflects after 100 days," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 4/28/2013

There are things we can control and things we can't. . . . It's about getting them the very best technology. We are not only in a hostile position with them, but we scare away serious players. I'm against that. I believe in giving a waiver to American oil companies to work in Cuba. If somebody is doing something I can't stop, I want the very best to be doing it.<sup>226</sup>

### **State Sponsored Terror List**

In April 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia signed a letter to Secretary of State Kerry urging the Administration to keep Cuba on the "state sponsors of terrorism" list.<sup>227</sup>

In a June 2015 New York Times article on travel and business relationship changes between U.S. and Cuba, the Times wrote that in May 2015, Cuba was removed from the state sponsors of terrorism list. Joe Garcia, described as someone "who has pushed for greater engagement with Cuba" was quoted as saying, "What is clearly over is the status quo. And the status quo was hurting the Cuban people and U.S. foreign policy."<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> "Congressman reflects after 100 days," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 4/28/2013

<sup>227</sup> "US Lawmakers want to keep Cuba on terror list," The Fronrunner, 4/29/2013 (Fronrunner is reporting off The Hill's "Global Affairs" blog, which did not show up in our Nexis search, 4/29/2013)

<sup>228</sup> "Doors open slightly to Cuba, but businesses face difficulty getting in," Lizette Alvarez, New York Times, 6/21/2015

## DEFENSE

## NATIONAL SECURITY

**Criticizing Obama for St. Bergdahl Trade**

In September 2014, the House passed a resolution condemning President Obama for not notifying Congress of the transfer of five Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo Bay for Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, as required in the 2014 Defense Appropriations Act. Obama said that he did not notify Congress because any media links could have jeopardized the exchange. Rep. Joe Garcia was one of 22 Democrats who voted with Republicans to pass the resolution.<sup>229</sup>

## VOTES

***Garcia Voted Against Decreasing Ballistic Missiles***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would bar the use of funds in the bill to operate or maintain more than 300 land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles.

[H.R. 2397, Vote #397, 7/23/2013; D: 141-55; R: 1-228]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll397.xml>

## USE OF MILITARY FORCE

## VOTES

***Garcia Voted Against Sunsetting Use of Military Force Authorization***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would sunset the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force 12 months after the bill's enactment.

[H.R. 4435, Vote #237, 5/22/2014; D: 164-30; R: 27-203]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll237.xml>

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<sup>229</sup> "House condemns Obama Taliban prisoner swap," Cristina Marcos, The Hill, 9/10/2014

## DISASTER ASSISTANCE

### FLOOD INSURANCE

In June 2013, the House passed a bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Garcia, that would delay flood insurance rate hikes under Section 207 of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act.<sup>230</sup> The Flood Insurance Act, passed in 2012, could have increased insurance rates by 25% each year (starting in October 2013) until reaching the “full risk rate,” or actual risk rate. The bill signed by Garcia would have blocked increases from starting in October 2013 by requiring a study to determine economic effects of the rate hikes and whether the increases are needed. Garcia said of the bill, “This is a big first step to keeping flood insurance rates affordable for the Keys and other coastal communities. I am committed to building on this strong bipartisan effort to pass the reforms we need to prevent steep increases to flood insurance rates and to ease the financial burdens on South Florida families.”<sup>231</sup>

In August 2013, The Sun-Sentinel reported that thousands of homeowners in Florida faced potential rate increases by hundreds or thousands of dollars a year in flood insurance premiums because of the Flood Insurance Act. The Act, according to the Sentinel “renews a heated debate about the wisdom of building close to the water.” Rep. Garcia weighed in on that debate, saying, “As much as people complain about houses being built too close to the ocean, and close to water, it also gives value to properties in Florida. It's what brings people to Florida in the first place.”<sup>232</sup>

In January 2014, Rep. Garcia introduced a bill that would have delayed the insurance rate hike provisions of the Flood Insurance Act by at least five years. The proposal would have applied to all property holders and would have established a tax credit up to \$7,500 for homeowners who raise their homes above the flood plain.<sup>233</sup>

In March 2014, Rep. Garcia co-sponsored and voted in favor of the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act,<sup>234</sup> which lowered rate increases on some policies, provided refunds on some policies that already went into effect and mandated a report be completed on the affordability of the original rate hike provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act.<sup>235</sup> In September 2014, Garcia credited his work on the bill as an effort that “saved us” from skyrocketing insurance rates.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> “Bill would halt flood insurance rate hike,” Timothy O’Hara, Key West Citizen, 6/17/2013

<sup>231</sup> “Bill would halt flood insurance rate hike,” Timothy O’Hara, Key West Citizen, 6/17/2013

<sup>232</sup> “Your flood insurance may soar,” William E. Gibson, Sun-Sentinel, 8/18/2013

<sup>233</sup> “Flood insurance quandary still baffles Congress,” Mary Ellen Klas, Bradenton Herald, 1/16/2014

<sup>234</sup> “Joe Garcia, Carlos Curbelo spar in debate in Key West,” Cammy Clark, Miami Herald, 9/24/2014

<sup>235</sup> [“Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act: Overview,” FEMA, FEMA website, last accessed 1/6/2016](#)

<sup>236</sup> “Joe Garcia, Carlos Curbelo spar in debate in Key West,” Cammy Clark, Miami Herald, 9/24/2014

## EDUCATION

### HIGHER EDUCATION

#### **“Gainful Employment” Rule for For-Profit Colleges**

In May 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia was one of seven Florida lawmakers who signed a letter to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan encouraging the Administration not to advance a “gainful employment” rule that would affect for-profit colleges. The rule would have allowed the federal government to take away loans to for-profit colleges if college graduates had to spend more than eight percent of their post-graduate income on loan repayments.<sup>237</sup>

Other instances of Joe Garcia opposing “gainful employment” regulations on behalf of for-profit colleges:

- In December 2013, Garcia signed onto a letter requesting that U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan provide whatever data was being used to rewrite pending gainful employment regulations. The letter expressed concern for the department’s process so far, and noted an NCES study showing that, by percentage, fewer for-profit college graduates than private non-profit graduates had college loan payments exceeding 12 percent of their monthly income.<sup>238</sup>
- In May 2014, Garcia signed onto a letter urging U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan not to implement gainful regulation regulations. Garcia’s letter argued the policy would unfairly impact for-profit schools (“proprietary institutions”), which he argued have “similar tuition, cohort default rates, and bar passage rates as comparable programs at nonprofit private institutions.”<sup>239</sup>
- In July 2014, the executive Director of the Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges (FAPSC) used Garcia in his argument against gainful employment regulations, saying that “In Congress, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, including Florida Reps. Alcee Hastings, Ted Deutch, Lois Frankel, and Joe Garcia, also oppose the Department’s clear misstep.”<sup>240</sup> The Herald has noted that the “FAPSC schools are mostly for-profit, but also include some nonprofit ‘career colleges’ that have a similar sales-driven business model.”<sup>241</sup>

### STUDENT LOANS

#### **Smarter Solutions for Students Act**

On May 23, 2013, Rep. Garcia’s office issued a press release that Rep. Garcia supports the Smarter Solutions for Students Act.<sup>242</sup> According to the Garcia statement,

Interest rates on student loans will double in July and make life harder for middle class families who are already struggling to make ends meet. That is why I reached across the aisle today to

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<sup>237</sup> “For-profit colleges flex political muscle,” Michael Vasquez, Miami Herald, 4/23/2015

<sup>238</sup> “Hastings and 29 Democrats Send Letter to ED Secretary Duncan Regarding Gainful Employment,” Congressional Documents and Publications, 12/14/2013

<sup>239</sup> <http://www.highereducationforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/5-27-14-Sec.-Duncan-GE-Comment-Letter.pdf>

<sup>240</sup> “Don’t hobble students at career colleges,” Curtis Austin, Miami Herald, 7/07/2014

<sup>241</sup> “For-profit colleges flex political muscle,” Michael Vasquez, Miami Herald, 4/23/2015

<sup>242</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia once again reached across the aisle to keep student loans affordable for South Florida’s middle class,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 5/23/2013

support the Smarter Solutions for Students Act. While I support extending the current low rate of 3.4%, this bill will prevent student loan rates from doubling in July.<sup>243</sup>

The next day, the Tampa Bay Times reported that the DCCC was criticizing Republicans for supporting the bill. According to DCCC, the “Students Pay More Act” would force college students to pay more interest for loans over time. The bill passed the House with GOP support and the support of four Democrats, including Joe Garcia.<sup>244</sup> The National Education Association also attacked the bill by sending out letters to Representatives.<sup>245</sup> The letters read in part:

NEA is opposed to the bill because we are concerned that H.R. 1911 will cause student loans to be excessively burdensome to college students leading to crushing debt as they enter the workforce. H.R. 1911 would change the current subsidized federal student loan programs to a variable interest rate instead of a fixed interest rate. These variable rates could lead to higher borrowing costs for students and increase the likelihood of default, in addition to making budgeting for loan repayment difficult. We were hopeful that work in the committee would prevent the doubling of interest rates; unfortunately H.R. 1911 is not that path and could result in rates being more than double the current interest rate. Further, we have concerns about proposals, such as H.R. 1911, that seek profits for deficit reduction at the expense of students struggling to address the substantial costs of postsecondary education.<sup>246</sup>

### **Student Loan Relief Act**

On July 22, 2013, Rep. Garcia went to the House floor to speak on his co-sponsorship of the Student Loan Relief Act.<sup>247</sup> He said:

"Education is, and will always be, the great equalizer in this country. I co-sponsored the Student Loan Relief Act in order to keep student loan rates at 3.4% for the over 7 million students that rely on Federal Stafford Loans to receive a good education. . . .

I call upon my colleagues, both in the House and the Senate, to take action so that college remains in reach of all Americans who dream about earning a degree, starting a business, and shaping the future."<sup>248</sup>

In September 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia introduced the Fairness in Student Loan Repayment Act, which would make eligible borrowers able to reap same benefits as borrowers of Direct Loans. According to his press release, the bill would not change the amount of debt owed, it would help some borrowers navigate an “otherwise confusing system” so that they could become eligible for Direct Loan status.<sup>249</sup>

## **ENERGY**

### **KEYSTONE PIPELINE**

<sup>243</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia once again reached across the aisle to keep student loans affordable for South Florida’s middle class,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 5/23/2013

<sup>244</sup> “Democrats rip Republicans on student loan vote but what about Joe Garcia?” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 5/24/2013

<sup>245</sup> [“Letter to the House opposing the Smart Solutions for Students Act \(H.R. 1911\),” National Education Association, 5/23/2013](#)

<sup>246</sup> [“Letter to the House opposing the Smart Solutions for Students Act \(H.R. 1911\),” National Education Association, 5/23/2013](#)

<sup>247</sup> “Congressman Garcia calls on Congress to reverse student loan interest rate hike,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 7/22/2013

<sup>248</sup> “Congressman Garcia calls on Congress to reverse student loan interest rate hike,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 7/22/2013

<sup>249</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia introduces student loan bill help college affordability,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014

In September 2014, Joe Garcia sent out a press release that said, “I believe the development of energy infrastructure, such as Keystone XL, is critical in this country. I believe that energy independence and the expansion of our contribution to the global energy trade, through exporting things like LNG, is equally so.”<sup>250</sup>

On November 14, 2014, Rep. Garcia voted against H.R. 5682, a bill approving the Keystone Pipeline.<sup>251</sup>

## VOTES

### ***Garcia Voted Against Funding a GAO Study on Negative Environmental Impacts of Keystone XL***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would require the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study and report to Congress on the total projected costs of a Keystone XL pipeline spill cleanup, including the potential impact of a petroleum spill on public health and the environment and the quantity and quality of water available for agricultural and municipal purposes

[H.R. 3, Vote #176, 5/22/2013; D: 183-11; R: 2:220]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll176.xml>

## OIL/GAS

### **Offshore Drilling**

In August 2010, while on the campaign trail for FL-25, Joe Garcia said, “I have always opposed offshore drilling. . . . When we can secure that (Deepwater Horizon well), then maybe we can take a look at that (deepwater wells in general). But we’ve already suffered. In a state that depends on its shorelines, no one should lose their jobs because oil is on their shores.”<sup>252</sup>

In January 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia co-wrote a letter to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Acting Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Kathryn Sullivan. The letter asked for information on how offshore drilling might negatively impact marine habitats and wildlife. The letter also said that the Administration should begin to more seriously consider those negative effects. It said, “Recent reports have shown that these activities can have significant impacts on marine mammals, fish, and their habitats, yet it is not at all clear that these impacts are being given serious consideration when decisions about offshore resource development are being made.”<sup>253</sup>

### **Keystone Pipeline/H.R. 2**

In September 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia sent a press release explaining why he voted against H.R. 2, “a compilation of 13 distinct controversial bills aimed at addressing energy source development.” In his press release, he is quoted as saying, “I believe the development of energy infrastructure, such as

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<sup>250</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s statement on American Energy Solutions for Lower Costs and More American Jobs Act,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014

<sup>251</sup> “Congressional votes for Florida the week of 11/4 – 11/20/2014,” Targeted News Service, 11/22/2014

<sup>252</sup> “Collier candidates split over offshore oil drilling ban,” Elysa Batista, Naples Daily News, 8/15/2010

<sup>253</sup> “Democrats raise concerns over environmental impacts of offshore activity,” Clare Foran, National Journal, 1/10/2014

Keystone XL, is critical in this country. I believe that energy independence and the expansion of our contribution to the global energy trade, through exporting things like LNG, is equally so.”<sup>254</sup>

He goes on to say that he voted against H.R. 2 because it would “systematically harm our environment” by cutting “the financial and regulatory responsibilities of big oil companies.”<sup>255</sup> Finally, he adds:

It (H.R. 2) contained many of the smart energy initiatives that I previously voted for independently, however, the addition of certain poison pill bills that would tie the hands of the EPA and block environmental protections, made it a bill I could not, in good conscience, support.<sup>256</sup>

## VOTES

### ***Garcia Voted Against Making it Easier for Americans to Sue Pipeline Operators***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would lengthen the time period for a person to file a claim against pipeline operators from 60 days to one year.

[H.R. 3, Vote #175, 5/22/2013; D: 182-12; R: 0:222]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll175.xml>

### ***Garcia Voted Against Banning Gas Exportation Related to Fracking***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would ban the exportation of gas produced under leases issued pursuant to the bill.

[H.R. 2728, Vote #602, 11/20/2013; D 140:56, R: 2:220]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll602.xml>

### ***Garcia Voted Pro-Pipeline at the Expense of Local Government***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would add a provision stipulating that the bill would not apply to projects unless the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has considered and responded to state and local objections and concerns.

[H.R. 1900, Vote #607, 11/21/2013; D: 181-13, R: 2: 223]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll607.xml>

### ***Garcia Voted to Fast-track Pipeline Constructions***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for Passage of the bill that would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve or deny pipeline construction certificates within one year of receiving a complete application. Other federal agencies that also must approve portions of pipeline construction

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<sup>254</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s statement on American Energy Solutions for Lower Costs and More American Jobs Act,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014

<sup>255</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s statement on American Energy Solutions for Lower Costs and More American Jobs Act,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014

<sup>256</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia’s statement on American Energy Solutions for Lower Costs and More American Jobs Act,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/18/2014



projects would have to approve or deny permits within 90 days of FERC's issuance of an environmental-impact statement. FERC could extend, for 30 days, the time for other agencies to approve or deny permits if they are unable to do so within the original 90-day period. If a federal agency does not act by the stipulated deadline, the permit would be deemed approved 30 days later.

[H.R. 1900, Vote #611, 11/21/2013; D: 26:165, R: 226:0]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll611.xml>

## NUCLEAR ENERGY

### VOTES

#### ***Garcia Voted for an Energy Appropriations Bill that Allocated \$11.3 Billion to Nuclear Energy***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for Passage of the bill that would provide \$30.4 billion in fiscal 2014 to fund the Energy Department, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation and several regional water and power authorities. In total, the bill would provide the Energy Department with \$24.9 billion, of which \$11.3 billion would be designated for the National Nuclear Security Administration. It would provide \$4.9 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers and \$965 million for the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation.

[H.R. 2609, Vote #345, 7/10/2013; D: 8:189, R: 219:9]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll345.xml>

## ENVIRONMENT

### CONSERVATION

#### **Voted in Favor of Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**

On May 29, 2014, the House Natural Resources Committee passed H.R. 4742 ("Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act) through committee, 24-17. The only Democrat to vote in favor the bill was Rep. Joe Garcia. Parts of the bill were controversial because it superseded other federal laws including the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act. Rep. Garcia's office offered no explanation to E&E News why Garcia voted as he did.<sup>257</sup>

According to the PEW Charitable Trusts, the bill would have undermine previous conservation efforts to restore fish populations throughout the U.S.<sup>258</sup>

#### **Opposes "No Take Zones"**

In September 2014, at a debate with challenger Carlos Curbelo, Rep. Garcia said that he opposed "no-take zones" for fishermen in Biscayne National Park and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.<sup>259</sup>

### CLEAN AIR

### VOTES

#### ***Garcia Voted Against Tougher Greenhouse Gas and Environmental Protections***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would make changes to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program including defining its purpose to include water conservation or irrigation, reducing the use of non-therapeutic antibiotics, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. It would require the Agriculture secretary to provide supplemental payments and technical assistance to producers that implement cost-effective land management and vegetative practices. It would limit EQIP payments to \$30,000 per fiscal year and \$150,000 during any five-year period.

[H.R. 1947, Vote #260, 6/19/2013; D: 153-39; R: 4-227]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll260.xml>

#### ***Garcia Voted Against Partially Cutting Federal Fossil Fuel Research and Development***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would decrease by \$30.9 million the amount provided by the bill for fossil energy research and development and transfer the savings to the bill's spending reduction account.

[H.R. 4923, Vote #381, 7/10/2014; D: 117-75; R: 67-160]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll381.xml>

<sup>257</sup> "Fisheries: House panel Oks Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization along party lines," Jessica Estepa, E&E News, 5/29/2014

<sup>258</sup> "[Reversing Course: H.R. 4742 undermines progress in rebuilding U.S. fish populations,](#)" Pew charitable Trusts, June 2014

<sup>259</sup> "Chamber," Key West Citizen, 9/25/2014

## CLEAN WATER

### VOTES

#### ***Garcia Voted to Allow Pesticide Use Near Navigable Waters***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill that would prohibit the EPA or a state government from requiring a permit to use pesticides near navigable waters if they are authorized for sale, use or distribution under federal pesticide control law.

[H.R. 935, Vote #455, 7/28/2014; D: 37-148; R: 216:0]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll455.xml>

#### ***Garcia Voted to Prohibit the EPA from Expanding Water Protections***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for Passage of the bill that would prohibit the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers from finalizing an expansion of the federal water pollution law. It also would prohibit the agencies from enforcing a rule which identifies more than 50 agricultural activities that are exempt from Clean Water Act permitting requirements as long as they are conducted in accordance with Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation practices.

[H.R. 5078, Vote #489, 9/9/2014; D: 35-151; R: 227-1]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll489.xml>

## OIL/DRILLING

#### **Calls to Ban Offshore Drilling in Gulf**

In June 2010, during his congressional campaign, Joe Garcia petitioned Governor Charlie Crist to ban offshore drilling in the Gulf indefinitely. According to the Naples Daily News, Garcia said “if Tallahassee politicians had their way in the past, there would have been rigs visible off Naples.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> “U.S. House candidate Garcia urges Crist to ban Gulf drilling for good,” Quentin Roux, Naples Daily News, 6/11/2010

## FINANCIAL ISSUES

### FINANCIAL MARKET REGULATIONS

#### VOTES

##### ***Garcia Voted for Wall Street Loopholes on Margin Calls and Collateralized Loans***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted to motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill that would exempt certain end users of derivatives from margin calls and allow certain banks that own collateralized loan obligations to retain those investments. It also would exempt certain entities from Securities and Exchange Commission registration requirements.

[H.R. 5405, Vote #501, 9/16/2014; D: 95-101; R: 225-1]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll501.xml>

##### ***Garcia Voted to Bail Out Financial Institutions that Participate in “Swap Activities”***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for passage of the bill that would amend a provision of the 2010 financial regulatory overhaul law that prohibits the federal bailout of swaps dealers or participants. The bill would exempt from the prohibition any covered depository institution that limits its security-based and other swap activities to hedging and other similar risk-mitigation activities. Non-structured and certain structured finance swap activities also would be exempt. Under the bill, insured depository institutions and uninsured U.S. branches of a foreign bank would be considered covered depository institutions.

[H.R. 992, Vote #569, 10/30/2013; D: 70-119; R: 222-3]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll569.xml>

##### ***Garcia Voted to Give Exemptions for Wall Street Traders from Transparency Requirements***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for Passage of the bill that would exempt private equity fund advisers from Securities and Exchange Commission registration requirements if their funds have not borrowed and do not have an outstanding principal amount exceeding twice their capital investments. The SEC would be required to issue rules, within six months of the bill's enactment, that set reporting and records maintenance requirements for exempted advisers that take into account an entity's fund size, governance, investment strategy, risk and other factors.

[H.R. 1105, Vote #622, 12/4/2013; D: 36-158; R: 218-1]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll622.xml>

## FOREIGN AID/ FOREIGN RELATIONS

### SYRIA INTERVENTION

On September 17, 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted in favor of the “Syrian rebel amendment,” which would allow the U.S. military to train and arm moderate Syrian rebels. In a statement, the President said that the bill was a critical to confronting ISIL. The bill passed the House 273-156.<sup>261</sup>

### OTHER ISSUES

#### **Turkic American Alliance**

In July 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia attended a “fast-breaking dinner” in the Capitol organized by the Turkic American Alliance, which is headed by Faruk Taban.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> “How South Florida lawmakers voted: Syrian amendment,” Miami Herald, 9/17/2014

<sup>262</sup> “TAA hosts iftar for members of Congress,” Ihsan Denli, Cihan News Agency, 7/17/2014

## HEALTHCARE

### OBAMACARE

#### **Voted to Delay Individual and Employer Mandate**

On July 17, 2013, Rep. Garcia was one of 22 Democrats to vote to delay the individual mandate provision of the ACA.<sup>263</sup> He also voted to delay the employer mandate.<sup>264</sup> Both bills would have delayed the enforcement of the individual and employer mandate by one year.<sup>265</sup>

In explaining the votes and his reason to buck party leadership, Garcia said that he was concerned that Florida had not set up exchanges at the time.<sup>266</sup> He also said:

People don't come to Washington to be Democrats or Republicans -- in life I've always find there are two ways to do things ... it's the right way or the wrong way, and I vote for the right way. I respect them making points, but I'm not going to make points, I'm going to make good law.<sup>267</sup>

In February 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia signed onto a letter to the President expressing the “concerns... about the potential impacts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on American business, specifically the development and implementation of employer reporting provisions. A variety of businesses, large and small, have expressed concerns about the potential cost, complexity and burdensome nature of the employer reporting requirements.” The letter goes on to say that business with fewer than 50 employees do not have to provide health care to employees but businesses with fewer than 25 employees that do provide healthcare may receive tax credits. According to the letter, “In order to monitor these requirements, the IRS has issued a proposed rule outlining complex, and potentially costly and burdensome reporting requirements.”<sup>268</sup>

On March 6, 2014 Rep. Joe Garcia was one of 27 Democrats who voted for a bill that would have delayed the individual mandate portion of the ACA.<sup>269</sup> According to a March 2014 National Journal article, Republican votes to alter or defund Obamacare allowed Joe Garcia to showcase his “nuanced voting record” on the ACA, such as voting against the individual mandate. Garcia explains:

The people in South Florida are signing up, taking advantage, and using the best parts of this plan. I voted on things like not requiring it to be a mandate, because if it's not required for Walmart, it shouldn't be required for Waltherthat [sic] is what my vote has been. If I can make it better, cheaper, faster, this is what I want to do. And every time they give me a chance to distinguish my position, I will take that, because in the end I didn't come here to hurt my constituents, I came to help my community.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> “Reps. Patrick Murphy and Joe Garcia side with Republicans on Obamacare,” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times Blogs (The Buzz), 7/17/2013

<sup>264</sup> “Hawkings: Obama touts health law as some nervous Democrats defect,” David Hawkings, Congressional Quarterly News, 7/18/2013

<sup>265</sup> “Hawkings: Obama touts health law as some nervous Democrats defect,” David Hawkings, Congressional Quarterly News, 7/18/2013

<sup>266</sup> “Dem frosh defy Pelosi,” John Bresnahan and Anna Palmer, Politico, 8/2/2013

<sup>267</sup> “Dem frosh defy Pelosi,” John Bresnahan and Anna Palmer, Politico, 8/2/2013

<sup>268</sup> “Murphy: Obamacare fix will benefit small businesses,” Rep. Patrick Murphy Press Release, 2/10/2014

<sup>269</sup> “Obamacare vote features vulnerable Democrats,” Jack Kitzpatrick, The Hotline, 3/6/2014

<sup>270</sup> “House Republicans are handling vulnerable Democrats Obamacare gifts,” Elahe Izadi, National Journal, 3/14/2014

On March 14, 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia was one of 12 Democrats who voted in favor of delaying the individual mandate for five years. The bill was the SGR Repeal and Medicare Provider Payment Modernization Act, and it passed the House 238-181.<sup>271</sup>

### **Co-Sponsored the Health Care Access Fairness and Penalty Delay Act**

In October 2013, Rep. Garcia co-sponsored the Health Care Access Fairness and Penalty Delay Act, which would have required the Health and Human Services Inspector General to certify when the healthcare.gov website becomes fully operational, a decision that would be formed in part by the Government Accountability Office. After the website becomes operations, individuals would have 90 days to enroll in a health care plan and penalties would begin at least 30 days after.<sup>272</sup>

### **Voted for GOP “Keep Your Health Care Plan” Bill (H.R. 3350)**

In November 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia was one of 39 Democrats to break with their party and vote in favor of Rep. Fred Upton’s Keep Your Health Care Plan bill. The Obama Administration and many Democrats said the GOP bill would effectively “gut” Obamacare.<sup>273</sup> Garcia denied that he voted for political reasons, instead arguing that, “I’m keeping the president’s word. The president said ‘If you like your health care, you can keep it.’”<sup>274</sup>

According to a November 15, 2013 Wire article, that ranked the 39 Democrats that voted for the Upton bill on “most disloyal” to the party given the district composition (“toss up” versus “safe Dem”), Rep. Joe Garcia was listed as having made nine “Anti-Obamacare” votes.<sup>275</sup>

### **On Obamacare Rollout**

In November 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia said of the ACA rollout, “Clearly the Obamacare rollout has been, to say the least, a bad reflection of what comes ahead. . . I am tremendously worried, not about my political future. Health care should be a right in America, not a privilege.”<sup>276</sup>

In January 2014, Politico ran a story on Obamacare and whether Democrats would run on it as a campaign issue in 2014 since “the main parts” of the ACA would be in full effect by November 2014. According to Politico, Garcia “insists he won’t be afraid to talk about it all” during the campaign season.<sup>277</sup> Politico goes on to describe Garcia’s attitude towards Obamacare:

“As this rolls out, I run into more and more people who shake my hand, their eyes watering at what they’ve been able to accomplish” by signing up for health insurance, Garcia said late last month after he’d returned to his district for the holidays. “This may not be perfect, but nothing ever is.”

Garcia -- who represents southern Florida, including the Keys -- isn't shy about bashing the sloppy website rollout: “First impressions are lasting ones, and the administration clearly ruined the first impression.” And he's one of the House Democrats who votes for delays and legislative changes.

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<sup>271</sup> “House passes bill to delay Obamacare,” WFIN 1330AM (Findlay, Ohio), 3/14/2014

<sup>272</sup> “Lipinski introduces bill providing adequate time to meet ACA requirements,” Rep. Dan Lipinski Press Release, 10/30/2013

<sup>273</sup> “Most vulnerable House Democrats side with GOP on ‘Obamacare’ vote,” Scott Bland, National Journal, 11/15/2013

<sup>274</sup> “Health care drags on Democrats in races,” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times, 11/30/2013

<sup>275</sup> “Here are the Democrats most likely to be disloyal on Obamacare,” Philip Bump, The Wire, 11/15/2013

<sup>276</sup> “Health care drags on Democrats in races,” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times, 11/30/2013

<sup>277</sup> “For Obamacare, it’s finally showtime,” David Nather, Politico, 1/1/2014

He voted for the House Republican Keep Your Health Plan Act, for example, and has already supported a one-year delay in the individual mandate.

But he also insists that the goal of expanded health coverage is worth the effort, since one third of his constituents are uninsured.

"I'm in. I'm all in," Garcia said. "If I get a few minutes to explain it to [a voter], I'll tell you how you'll be better off. If not, I didn't expect to be buried in the Capitol anyway."<sup>278</sup>

### **2014 Campaign**

In a February 2014 National Journal article titled "Another Democrat Apologizes for Obamacare" the author explains that after Rep. Joe Garcia was attacked for supporting Obamacare by Republicans, the Democratic House Majority PAC defended Garcia by putting out an ad of its own. In the Democratic ad, Garcia was portrayed as "working to fix Obamacare." The ad also says "He voted to let you keep your existing health care plan and took the White House to task for the disastrous health care website."<sup>279</sup>

## MEDICARE

In September 2014, at a rally on Capitol Hill, Rep. Joe Garcia told the crowd, "I will never vote to cut Medicare, period."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> "For Obamacare, it's finally showtime," David Nather, Politico, 1/1/2014

<sup>279</sup> "Another Democrat apologizes for Obamacare," Beth Reinhard, National Journal, 2/11/2014

<sup>280</sup> "Election's senior moments," Paul Demko, Modern Healthcare, 10/6/2014

## IMMIGRATION

### DREAM ACT

#### **Voted for Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act**

On June 6, 2013, Rep. Garcia voted in favor of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act, which included a Steve King amendment that would have prohibited the implementation of DACA “and prosecutorial discretion.” Rep. Garcia released a statement that day explaining that he did not like and voted against the King amendment, but did vote for the overall DHS bill.<sup>281</sup>

### IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

#### **On 2010 Campaign Trail**

In 2010, the Naples Daily News reported on Joe Garcia’s response to a tough immigration law passed by the Arizona legislature and signed by its governor, Jan Brewer.<sup>282</sup> Garcia said of the state law and immigration in general:

"I understand people's frustration in Arizona, but we can't have 50 different states that have different immigration laws," Garcia said. "The reality is this isn't a fix. What this does is confuse issues and make law enforcement officers' jobs harder, not easier."

The government needs to do three important things, Garcia said.

"We have to secure our border to protect our citizens. We have to protect American jobs. And finally we have to find a pathway forward for those people that apply," Garcia said. "We get them to the back of the line, they pay a fine, they pay their back taxes, they learn English and they get a status."

Nevertheless, Garcia said what is clear is that those who want to become Americans need to pass a thorough background check.

Someone who has committed any crime in the U.S., Garcia said, should be deported to his or her country of origin.

"The Arizona law does not do any of those things. It just puts further burden on state and local government," he said, adding that talk by some Florida legislators about bringing a similar law to the Sunshine State is just talk. "Tallahassee politicians love to demagogue the issue and then pass unfunded mandates to the counties and cities. That's a federal responsibility and we need to get this solved. Unfortunately in Congress they are doing the same thing they do in Tallahassee - a lot of talk and no action."<sup>283</sup>

#### **Soundbyte on Immigration – Americans “get to choose”**

On January 29, 2013, CNN aired a segment on immigration reform and whether it would get traction in President Obama’s second term. The segment showed a sound byte of Rep. Garcia saying, “Obviously,

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<sup>281</sup> “Congressman Garcia’s statement on DHS funding,” Targeted News Service, 6/6/2013

<sup>282</sup> “Candidates share similar stances on immigration,” Elysa Batista, Naples Daily News, 8/16/2010

<sup>283</sup> “Candidates share similar stances on immigration,” Elysa Batista, Naples Daily News, 8/16/2010

we need to know who's here, why they're here and whether we want to keep them. We get to choose, as Americans, not them."<sup>284</sup>

## VISA/ASYLUM VOTES

### H.R. 15

#### Overview

In October 2013, The Washington Post reported that "House Democrats released their own comprehensive immigration proposal Wednesday, hoping to put renewed pressure on the Republican majority to move forward on stalled border legislation."<sup>285</sup> The Democrats' bill, known as H.R. 15,<sup>286</sup> was the same as the Senate immigration reform bill passed by the Senate in June 2013, with the exception that the Democratic bill took out a provision that would have added 700 miles of fencing and 20,000 more border control agents to the U.S. – Mexico border.<sup>287</sup> In the Washington Post piece, Rep. Garcia was quoted as saying, "You're not all going to love it—I don't love it. . . [but] we're trying to move this debate forward."<sup>288</sup>

"We are not introducing the perfect bill. But we are introducing a comprehensive reform bill that provides that space for compromise that takes the very hard and tough work that was done in the Senate and takes the very detailed and specific work that was done in the House and so, we put them both together," Garcia said. "And we have taken out the very controversial Corker-Hoeven (border security amendment), which I think everyone understood has opposition not only in elements in the Democratic Party but very strong opposition of members of the House."<sup>289</sup>

According to CQ News, by October 30, 2013, three Republican Members co-sponsored or said they would co-sponsor H.R. 15 (Reps. Jeff Denham, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and David Valado).<sup>290</sup>

In November 2013, Rep. Garcia, a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, met with "Fast for Families" leaders, who had been fasting for over a week in hopes that the House of Representatives would vote on H.R. 15. In a press release about the meeting, Rep. Garcia said, "We have more than 190 votes and if Speaker Boehner allows a vote on the House Floor, we will be able to pass comprehensive immigration reform. This is not dead, this will pass."<sup>291</sup> Rep. Garcia later joined in fasting for 24 hours in support of the bill.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> "Obama to speak in Nevada; Too early to tell on immigration reform; Ray LaHood stepping down; Nick Wallenda attempts daring feat; Winter storms on the horizon; This week, two-year anniversary of the Arab Spring," Ashleigh Banfield, CNN, 1/29/2013

<sup>285</sup> "House Democrats unveil plan, hoping to nudge border debate," David Nakamura, Washington Post, 10/3/2013

<sup>286</sup> "Congressman Joe Garcia introduces commonsense comprehensive immigration reform bill," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 10/2/2013

<sup>287</sup> "House Democrats unveil plan, hoping to nudge border debate," David Nakamura, Washington Post, 10/3/2013

<sup>288</sup> "House Democrats unveil plan, hoping to nudge border debate," David Nakamura, Washington Post, 10/3/2013

<sup>289</sup> "Immigration reform: House Democrats try to jump start stalled debate," Catherine E. Shoichet and Ione Molineras, CNN, 10/2/2013

<sup>290</sup> "218: 3 Republicans sign onto Democratic immigration bill," Emma Dumain and Matt Fuller, Congressional Quarterly News, 10/30/2013

<sup>291</sup> "CHC visits 'Fast for Families' leaders," Congressional Hispanic Caucus Press Release, 11/20/2013

<sup>292</sup> "Rep. Juan Vargas passes immigration reform fast to Rep. Joe Garcia," Rep. Juan Vargas Press Release, 12/5/2013

By March 26, 2014, Rep. Garcia was credited by the New Democrat Coalition with being the leader of a discharge petition effort to force H.R. 15 to a vote.<sup>293</sup> In order for a discharge petition to get triggered and be brought for a vote, at least 218 Members need to sign the petition.<sup>294</sup>

### **Positive/Negative Reviews of H.R. 15**

The Dream Action Coalition said the bill had no chance of passing the House and that it hoped “Democrats are not just playing immigration politics.”<sup>295</sup>

When the bill was first presented, the Miami Herald wrote “the bill Garcia and fellow Democrats are pushing has so little chance of passing right now that, coupled with the all-Democrat cast that unveiled the proposal, the legislation is perceived on Capitol Hill to be more of a political play to pressure stalling House Republicans.”<sup>296</sup>

SEIU approved the House bill,<sup>297</sup> issuing a statement that said, in part:

Congressman Garcia and his colleagues have shown good faith by introducing a bill that represents a bipartisan policy agenda that was crafted by Democrats and Republicans working together. Their proposal includes an earned path to citizenship, effective enforcement that is consistent with our values and needed reforms so that future immigrants come legally. If passed, it will usher in a 21st century immigration system that will strengthen our economy and democracy.<sup>298</sup>

The American Federation of Teachers supported the measure.<sup>299</sup>

## OTHER VISA/ASYLUM ACTIONS

### **Op-ed New Dems Support Pathway to Citizenship**

In April 2013, as a member of the New Democrat Coalition Immigration Task Force, Rep. Garcia co-authored an op-ed for Politico on immigration reform. The op-ed focused immigration and business, but also mentioned immigration reform for undocumented immigrants and that the New Democrat Coalition supports a pathway to citizenship<sup>300</sup>:

The aspect of immigration reform that has arguably received the most attention is the need for undocumented immigrants who want to make right by the law and contribute to our country to be able to participate more fully in our society. The New Democrat Coalition believes that we as a country should provide hard-working undocumented immigrants in our communities the opportunity to work toward permanent residency with a path to earned citizenship within a reasonable time frame. We also believe in the need to prioritize immigrant integration, with a

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<sup>293</sup> “New Democrat Coalition applauds introduction of comprehensive immigration reform discharge petition,” New Democrat Coalition Press Release, 3/26/2014

<sup>294</sup> “Dems target GOP in ‘last effort’ of the year on immigration reform,” Mike Lillis, The Hill, 4/16/2014

<sup>295</sup> “House Democrats unveil plan, hoping to nudge border debate,” David Nakamura, Washington Post, 10/3/2013

<sup>296</sup> “Rep. Garcia is new Miami face of long-odds immigration push,” Marc Caputo, Miami Herald, 10/2/2013

<sup>297</sup> “House Democrats step forward on immigration reform,” SEIU Press Release, 10/2/2013

<sup>298</sup> “House Democrats step forward on immigration reform,” SEIU Press Release, 10/2/2013

<sup>299</sup> “AFT Statement on House immigration bill,” American Federation of Teachers Press Release, 10/2/2013

<sup>300</sup> “It’s time for immigration reform,” Reps. Jared Polis, Joaquin Castro and Joe Garcia, Politico, 4/12/2013

focus on making English, American civics classes and naturalization more accessible for new Americans.

We cannot hope to put a stop to unlawful immigration until we create a system for legal immigration that works and a pathway to citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants who call this country home. While we have addressed our hopes for an immigration reform package, what is most important to our caucus is the need to reflect our values as Americans, focusing on growing our economy, reuniting families and ensuring that immigrant communities can successfully integrate and fully participate in our communities, economy, and civil society.<sup>301</sup>

### **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA)/ President Obama Executive Action**

In April 2014, Rep. Garcia told the Tampa Bay Times that he “disagree[d] with the President” on DACA and that “there’s a lot of things that can be done.” President Obama was not open to expanding DACA at that time.<sup>302</sup>

On November 19, 2014, Rep. Garcia issued a statement about President Obama’s announcement that he would pursue executive action on immigration.<sup>303</sup> Garcia’s statement:

"I applaud the President for finally taking bold, decisive action to address this country's immigration crisis. He gave this Congress plenty of time to pass immigration reform legislation, but Republican leadership has made it clear they have no intention of actually solving our immigration problems. If Congress isn't willing to do its job, it's up to the President act.

I look forward to learning the details of the President's actions, but am certain he will provide much needed relief to countless families that are American in every way but on paper. The President has the legal justification to act, as others have done before him, and I hope he uses his authority to its greatest extent."<sup>304</sup>

### **2014 Crisis with Flood of Children at U.S.-Mexico Border**

In July 2014, Rep. Garcia held a press conference in response to waves of child migrants who were detained at the Mexico-U.S. border. Garcia criticized President Obama’s request for funding to more quickly deport the unaccompanied migrant children.<sup>305</sup> Garcia said:

In light of the violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, it is essential that we continue to treat this situation first and foremost as what it is - a humanitarian crisis. That is why I am troubled by the President's decision yesterday to seek increased discretion to speed the removal of unaccompanied children. We have yet to see the exact details of the Administration's proposal and await its release. It is critical, however, in moving forward to address this humanitarian crisis that we not sacrifice the due process protections for these children.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> “It’s time for immigration reform,” Reps. Jared Polis, Joaquin Castro and Joe Garcia, Politico, 4/12/2013

<sup>302</sup> “Rallies target stalled policy,” Alex Leary, Tampa Bay Times, 4/9/2014

<sup>303</sup> “Statement—Congressman Joe Garcia issues statement in anticipation of President’s Executive Action on immigration,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 11/19/2014

<sup>304</sup> “Statement—Congressman Joe Garcia issues statement in anticipation of President’s Executive Action on immigration,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 11/19/2014

<sup>305</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia hosts press conference in response to Administration’s announcement on unaccompanied minors,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 7/1/2014

<sup>306</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia hosts press conference in response to Administration’s announcement on unaccompanied minors,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 7/1/2014

In July 2014, Rep. Garcia went on a “fact-finding trip” to the Rio Grande Valley to view the detained children.<sup>307</sup>

In August 2014, Rep. Garcia co-authored an op-ed on the child migration crisis. The piece mentions passing immigration reform as an “important component to addressing the current problem” but also speaks of the need for a “comprehensive economic development and security plan for Central America” and then introduces some ideas for a long-term solution including forming an inter-agency task force for the region that would create public-private partnerships.<sup>308</sup>

In an October 1, 2014 Miami Herald article on the Central American children migration issue, political candidate Curbelo was described as supporting returning most of the children if they do not qualify for asylum. The Herald goes on, “Garcia articulates the same policy now -- but spent more time during the summer arguing for reforms that would reunify divided families to avert future waves of border crossings.”<sup>309</sup>

#### VOTES

##### ***Garcia Voted Against Granting More Funds toward Immigration Pardon Reviews***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would increase by \$2 million the amount provided for Justice Department administrative review and appeals of pardon and clemency petitions and immigration-related activities, and decrease by the same amount the amount provided for salaries and expenses at the Federal Prison System.

[H.R. 4460, Vote #247, 5/29/2014; D: 124-64; R: 3-218]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll247.xml>

#### OTHER IMMIGRATION ISSUES

##### **Garcia’s Amendment to H.R. 2217 – Increase Funds to Customs Border Protection**

On June 5, 2013, Rep. Garcia offered an amendment to H.R. 2217. The amendment would increase funds for U.S. Customs and Border Protection salaries and expenses by \$10 million, while reducing ICE salaries and expenses by the same amount. It would also reduce the Coast Guard Acquisition, Construction and improvements by \$3 million.<sup>310</sup>

##### **Response to Rep. Steve King’s Immigrant Comment**

In July 2013, Rep. Steve King made comments to Newsmax, saying of immigrant children brought to the U.S., “For every one who’s a valedictorian, there’s another 100 out there that weigh 130 pounds, and they’ve got calves the size of cantaloupes because they’re hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert. Those people would be legalized with the same act.” Rep. Garcia later confronted King about his

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<sup>307</sup> “Rep. Joe Garcia hosts press conference in response to Administration’s announcement on unaccompanied minors,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 7/1/2014

<sup>308</sup> “Confronting a crisis: Child refugees at our Southwest border,” Rep. Joe Garcia and Claude Fontheim, Congressional Quarterly News, 8/14/2014

<sup>309</sup> “On immigration, Miami congressional race between Carlos Curbelo and Joe Garcia is outlier,” Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald, 10/1/2014

<sup>310</sup> Washington: Bill summary and status 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2013-2014) H.Amdt.105, Library of Congress, 6/5/2013

comments during a Judiciary Committee hearing, calling them “offensive” and “beneath the dignity of this House and of this country.”<sup>311</sup>

### **Venezuela**

In February 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia asked President Obama to stop deporting people from Venezuela and to consider political asylum applications from Venezuela. According to Garcia, demonstrators part of the 2014 country-wide protests against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro would likely be granted asylum. According to the Venezuelan government, by February 2014, 16 people had died and 150 were injured in protests.

Reps. Garcia and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen cosponsored a resolution condemning violence in Venezuela and encouraging the U.S. to help resolve the unrest.<sup>312</sup> In December 2014, Congress passed S. 2142, the Venezuelan Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act that froze assets and issued visa bans to individuals working with Maduro government and involved in human rights abuses. Rep. Garcia said of the bill’s passage in a press release, “I am pleased to see sanctions against the Maduro regime finally pass this Congress. This sanctions package will expressly target only those individuals directly involved in acts of violence...not the Venezuelan people.”<sup>313</sup>

In August 2014, Venezuela announced that it would exit CITGO, the American unit of the Venezuelan state-run oil and gas company. Joe Garcia’s office released a press release<sup>314</sup> about the sale:

“Venezuela’s sale of Citgo is an act of desperation” said Garcia. “It is a cheap move that ignores the fundamental problems caused by the government’s gross mismanagement. It is bad for Venezuelans, and it is bad for us.”

....

“Citgo and PDVSA represent far more than a natural resource and economic engine, they have historically been a point of pride for the Venezuelan people. We should not stand by and watch Maduro sell it off for parts,” exclaimed Garcia.

### **Haiti**

In September 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia was one of a bipartisan group of House members who pushed President Obama to create a type of fast-track immigration program for Haitians affected by the 2010 earthquake. Garcia said, “This is one of the programs where it makes absolutely no sense not to move forward... Inevitably, they will be here – and we’re prolonging the inevitable to the detriment of our community. It’s bad policy and bad politics.”<sup>315</sup> The program pushed would be a reunification program similar to the 2007 family reunification program for Cubans. Yearly immigration caps would not affect green-card authorizations for family members visa petitions that are approved.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> “White House, GOP come to blows on immigration,” Russell Berman, The Hill, 7/24/2013

<sup>312</sup> “Rep. Garcia asks to stop deportations to Venezuela,” Laura Wides-Munoz, Associated Press, 2/25/2014

<sup>313</sup> “Congressman Garcia applauds passage of Venezuelan sanctions,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 12/11/2014

<sup>314</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia hosts press conference regarding the sale of CITGO in Venezuela,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/27/2014

<sup>315</sup> “Advocates, Florida delegation push immigration program to help rebuild Haiti,” Chris Adams, McClathcy Washington Bureau, 9/16/2014

<sup>316</sup> “Advocates, Florida delegation push immigration program to help rebuild Haiti,” Chris Adams, McClathcy Washington Bureau, 9/16/2014

## ISRAEL

### **Supporter of J-Street/Dinner with EMERGE and connection to Nakshawani**

In a November 2014 New York Observer op-ed on J-Street and how most of its supported candidates lost re-election, Joe Garcia was described as one "J Street was unable to save." According to the New York Observer, Garcia made two controversial actions during his tenure in Congress:

(Joe Garcia) made headlines earlier this year for accepting campaign donations as well as speaking at the annual fundraising dinner for the radical-Islamic group EMERGE. The soon-to-be unemployed congressman appeared on the same bill with Dr. Sayed Ammar Nakshawani, who has denounced the two-state solution, stating, "It is barbaric that this Zionist state is allowed to continue."<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> "After election day debacle, J Street deceives supporters," Paul Miller, New York Observer, 11/11/2014

## JUDICIARY

### VOTES

#### ***Garcia Voted Against Giving Money to the Office of Civil Rights and Liberties***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would increase by \$3.3 million the amount provided to the Office of the Secretary and Executive Management, with the aim of restoring funding to the Office of Civil Rights and Liberties to fiscal 2013 levels. It would decrease by \$4 million the amount provided for the Customs and Border Protection automation modernization account.

[H.R. 2217, Vote #194, 6/5/2013; D: 167-27; R: 0-230]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll194.xml>

## MINORITY ISSUES

### GAY ISSUES

#### **Vice Chair of LGBT Equality Caucus**

During his tenure in office, Rep. Joe Garcia was a vice chair of the LGBT Equality Caucus.<sup>318</sup>

#### **Letter to SSA for Same Sex Couples Survivor Benefits**

In October 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia signed onto a letter to the Social Security Administration, encouraging it to identify people who had previously applied for spousal and survivor benefits as a beneficiary to a same-sex couple and were previously denied those benefits and who might now be eligible because of a 2013 Supreme Court ruling granting benefits to couples who reside in states that recognize gay marriage.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> "Garcia, Curbelo fight for congressional seat," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 10/18/2014

<sup>319</sup> "Schwartz, Takano and Davis lead efforts to ensure same-sex couples receive the social security benefits they've earned," Rep. Allyson Y. Schwartz Press Release, 10/1/2014

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### BENEFIT CUTS

In October 2014, Hotline reported that a NRCC ad claimed that Rep. Garcia “supported a plan to raise the Social Security retirement age to 69.”<sup>320</sup>

### OTHER ISSUES

In April 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia introduced H.R. 1560, to “authorize the Internal Revenue Service to permit truncated social security numbers on wage reporting provided to employees.” Co-sponsors of the bill were Reps. Trey Radel and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, both Republicans from Florida.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> “Committees attack both candidates on entitlements,” Alex Brown, The Hotline, 10/21/2014

<sup>321</sup> “Rep. Garcia introduces bill to permit provision of truncated social security numbers on wage reporting to employees,” Targeted News Service, 4/19/2013

## PRIVATELY OWNED MILITARY HOUSING PROJECTS

**Unpaid Property Taxes for Southeast Housing (Privately Owned Military Housing Projects)**

In April 2013, The Key West Citizen reported that Rep. Garcia wanted the company Balfour Beatty (subsidiary of Southeast Housing), which owned military housing projects on military land in the Key West, to pay \$11.3 million worth of liens and interests on their (five) properties from unpaid local property taxes and he wanted Southeast to be subject to future property taxes. Southeast had sued the Monroe County Property Appraiser's Office for revoking Southeast's tax exempt status, given because it was building on military land. Although Southeast did rent the majority of its apartments to service members, it also rented some units to civilians as well.<sup>322</sup>

When asked why he was voicing an opinion on the issue even though he has no jurisdiction because it is a state issue, Rep. Garcia said:

"We took a position because it is about our community. . . . I may not have direct jurisdiction over Florida taxes, but I certainly know that it unfairly impacts the community. I think what you see is a relationship and responsibility where the Navy got out of the (housing) business and gave it to someone else. They (the Navy) have washed their hands of it and are staying out of the legal argument. Likewise, Balfour Beatty is trying to make a buck. They are not doing this out of the goodness of their hearts or to help the Navy. They are making a buck. They are making a pretty buck. Finally, the property appraiser is doing what he gets paid to do, which is to look after taxes. When I look all three sides of the argument, I think my local officials are right and my appraiser is right."<sup>323</sup>

Garcia also said, "This is a for-profit company that engaged in a for-profit venture. . . . I am not anti-military. Everyone should be treated fairly. This isn't what the city (of Key West) bargained for."

Garcia also denounced that the state legislature introduced bills that would exempt Southeast and other companies from paying local taxes back to January 2007, when Southeast's tax exemption began. Garcia said, "It's unfortunate that Tallahassee decided to step in."<sup>324</sup> In the Florida state legislature, a bill was passed that would have allowed privately owned military housing in Florida exempt from local taxes for all units that are occupied by military members, but Governor Rick Scott vetoed the bill.<sup>325</sup> Garcia said of Gov. Scott's veto:

"While I do not agree with the reasoning behind his decision, I believe that a veto was the right decision. This is simply a matter of fairness - no single company should receive unfair or unequal treatment. We must all put our fair share of taxes back in our local communities. It is my hope that the state Legislature will now let the courts resolve this matter."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> "To pay or not to pay back taxes; City, Balfour Beatty in court to argue payment of liens placed on property in 2007," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 4/2/2013

<sup>323</sup> "Congressman reflects after 100 days," Timothy O'hara, Key West Citizen, 4/28/2013

<sup>324</sup> "To pay or not to pay back taxes; City, Balfour Beatty in court to argue payment of liens placed on property in 2007," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 4/2/2013

<sup>325</sup> "Garcia: Track all non-taxed military housing," Sean Kinnery, Florida Keys Keynoter, 6/15/2013

<sup>326</sup> "Military property tax bill vetoed," Timothy O'Hara, Key West Citizen, 6/13/2013



By June 15, 2013 a Garcia amendment passed the House as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.<sup>327</sup> The Garcia amendment would have required the military, according to Garcia's field director, to "detail 'any project across the country in which the owner of that project has outstanding local tax obligation. In Key West, Balfour Beatty is the perfect example.'"<sup>328</sup>

## TAX BREAKS/ TAX LOOPHOLES

### VOTES

#### ***Garcia Voted For Tax Breaks For Universities and Corporate Research Companies***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for passage of a bill that would permit companies that incur research and development expenses in the United States to deduct up to 20 percent of the amount in which their qualified research expenses exceed a calculated base amount for the current taxable year. It would permanently extend and expand a tax break for university and corporate research expenses that expired in December 2013.

[H.R. 4438, Vote #211, 5/9/2014; D: 62-130; R: 1-212]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll211.xml>

#### ***Garcia Voted to Give Charitable Tax Breaks to S Corporations and Reduce Likelihood of being Taxed***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for passage of the bill that would make permanent the reduced recognition period for S corporations under which they could be taxed for sales of certain assets. It would make permanent a tax break for the charitable contributions of S corporations and allow them to qualify for the same tax exemptions that apply to individuals for charitable contributions.

[H.R. 4453, Vote #311, 6/12/2014; D: 42-153; R: 221-2]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll311.xml>

#### ***Garcia Voted to Increase Depreciation Deductions for Businesses***

In 2014, Rep. Joe Garcia voted for passage of the bill that would make permanent the 50 percent bonus depreciation rules for businesses that place new property in service in a tax year. It would allow businesses to deduct from their taxes 50 percent of the adjusted basis of the value of that qualified property, in addition to amounts that they could otherwise claim under depreciation rules. It would allow bonus depreciation against both the regular tax system and the alternative minimum tax. It also would adjust for inflation the formula for depreciating certain passenger automobiles and would make permanent the special rule for the allocation of bonus depreciation to a long-term contract.

[H.R. 4718, Vote #404, 7/11/2014; D: 34-158; R: 224-2]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll404.xml>

<sup>327</sup> "House of Representatives passes Garcia amendment to provide greater transparency for the military housing privatization initiative," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 6/14/2013.

<sup>328</sup> "Garcia: Track all non-taxed military housing," Sean Kinnery, Florida Keys Keynoter, 6/15/2013



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[H.R. 4438, Vote #211, 5/9/2014; D: 62-130; R: 1-212]

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[H.R. 4453, Vote #311, 6/12/2014; D: 42-153; R: 221-2]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll311.xml>

## TRADE

### COLOMBIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

#### **Rep. Joe Garcia Support Colombian Free Trade Agreement**

In August 2013, Rep. Garcia announced that he would visit Colombia “to discuss several economic and cultural issues.” In his press release, he was scheduled to meet with the Association of Colombian Flower Exporters, the Colombian Chamber of Commerce and the seaport and airport of Cartagena. In his press release, he said that he was a “longtime supporter of the Colombian Free Trade Agreement.”<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia will visit Colombia to discuss imperative matters impacting both countries,” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 8/14/2013

## VETERANS/TROOPS

### HEALTHCARE

#### **Calling on Congress to Skip Recess for VA Issues**

In July 2015, Rep. Garcia signed onto a letter calling on Congress to stay in session and forego its August break so that it can pass legislation to improve veterans' healthcare and "address the crisis with the Department of Veterans Affairs."<sup>330</sup>

### OTHER VOTES

#### **Introduced Veterans Conservation Corps Act**

In November 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia introduced the Veterans Conservation Corps Act of 2013, designed to "provide job opportunities on public land and conservation projects for unemployed veterans, leveraging the skills they developed in the military."<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> "Bustos leads group of 116 lawmakers in calling on Congress to stay in session until veterans' healthcare bill is passed," Rep. Cheri Bustos Press Release, 7/25/2014

<sup>331</sup> "Congressman Garcia introduces veteran's conservation corps bill," Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 11/13/2013

## WELFARE

### SNAP/FOOD STAMPS

In September 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia made a speech on the House floor expressing his concerns over legislation that would cut \$40 billion in funding for SNAP. Garcia said, “This is the wrong approach; at a time when many families and communities are still struggling to bounce back from the Great Recession, we should be working to strengthen, not undermine, the SNAP program.”<sup>332</sup>

On November 5, 2013, Rep. Garcia co-wrote an op-ed in the Miami Herald titled “Don’t cut food stamps.”<sup>333</sup> In preparation for the Farm bill vote and possible SNAP cuts within the bill, Garcia reiterates his support for the SNAP program:

Some in Congress may question the importance and value of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Pro-gram (SNAP, or what was known as food stamps), but here in Miami, we know that this is a program that is working for many in our city and across our state.

Yet the program is threatened -- first, by the massive cut of \$40 billion that passed by a narrow margin in the U.S. House of Representatives. Millions would lose benefits or be removed from the program altogether. And it is on top of another cut that began on Nov. 1.<sup>334</sup>

## VOTES

### ***Garcia Voted Against Extending SNAP Benefits to Personal Hygiene Items***

In 2013, Rep. Joe Garcia voted against an amendment that would make household personal hygiene items eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps.

[H.R. 1947, Vote #265, 6/20/2013; D: 117-74; R: 6-223]

<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2013/roll265.xml>

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<sup>332</sup> “Congressman Joe Garcia discusses the importance of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP),” Rep. Joe Garcia Press Release, 9/19/2013

<sup>333</sup> “Don’t cut food stamps,” Joe Garcia and Charlse Auslander, Miami Herald, 11/5/2013

<sup>334</sup> “Don’t cut food stamps,” Joe Garcia and Charlse Auslander, Miami Herald, 11/5/2013