



## Tips for Talking about Home Rule ... Your **State of the City** Address

It is tough for everyday people to be heard by a state government that is miles away and meets infrequently. This is precisely why local government is so effective! But in today's climate of state preemption, it is more important than ever to engage as many local residents as possible in the fight to protect and promote Home Rule. Use these tips to transform your annual "State of the City" address into a rallying cry that business owners, community leaders and everyday residents can connect with and support.

- ▼ **STATE HOW YOUR CITY IS UNIQUE.** You are different from every other city in Florida. Highlight those differences. Share what makes you special. Be sure to talk about your city's spirit and unique history.
- ▼ **TALK ABOUT A NEW SERVICE OR PROGRAM YOU'VE RECENTLY BEGUN THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CITIZENS.** Who does the program/project benefit? How does it improve lives? Perhaps you built a new park, restored an important historical building or landmark, built a new senior center or created a bike trail? Use this example to highlight how responsive city hall is to local needs.
- ▼ **SHARE DETAILS OF A NEW ORDINANCE THAT IS TRANSFORMATIONAL TO A BROAD NUMBER OF CITIZENS.** What local issue did that ordinance solve? What will it mean to those who live in your community?
- ▼ **DEFINE HOME RULE.** Make the connection that the positive changes in your community are possible because of Home Rule. If you didn't have local self-government, you would have to go to Tallahassee to get permission to make decisions about your neighborhoods, buildings and businesses.
- ▼ **DESCRIBE THE LATEST ATTACKS BY STATE LAWMAKERS ON LOCAL DECISION-MAKING.** Which egregious attack on Home Rule fires up your community the most? Maybe it is vacation rentals in neighborhoods, small cell equipment clogging up streetscapes, smoking on public beaches ... Remind citizens that local officials are not allowed to resolve certain problems because the state legislature has tied our hands, usually at the request of special interests!
- ▼ **INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION.** Explain that city officials cannot do their work alone. We need everyday residents to feel empowered to find their voice and take action. Highlight contributions that individual citizens, businesses or organizations have made to your city, and explain why they matter. Tell your residents you need every one of them to support Home Rule – not just with state lawmakers but with each other, too.

