RESOLUTION 2009-1

A RESOLUTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BARRIER ISLANDS GOVERNMENT COUNCIL (BIG-C) OPPOSING OFFSHORE DRILLING IN STATE CONTROLLED WATERS OFF THE COASTLINE OF FLORIDA; AND PROVIDNG FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Barrier islands Government Council, known as the BIG-C, consists of eleven cities and towns on the barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico on the west coast of Pinellas County, Florida; and

WHEREAS, the oil drilling economic benefits alleged fail to take into account the risks to Florida's tourism industry due to offshore drilling rigs, pipelines, storage facilities, vessels and other infrastructure in and on Florida land and waters that are in direct visual, physical and environmental conflict with the world-class beaches that are the basis of Florida's tourism and economy; and

WHEREAS, despite technological advances in oil rig drilling technology, there is no positive assurance that catastrophic damage to our coastline, beaches, plant and fish life can be avoided—whether from drilling mud containing heavy metals such as mercury, regular production, or accidental oil spills—and whether during normal operating conditions or during storm situations; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 2009, a major oil spill began spewing oil into ocean waters off the western coast of Australia, a spill that had reached 6,000 square miles by September 14, 2009 and was expected to continue to flow for 6 weeks, using state-of-the-art technology touted as the safest ever by the oil industry and further claimed to be the same technology that would be used in Florida waters; and

WHEREAS, in 1993 Pinellas County learned how environmentally and economically destructive an oil spill can be when a vessel collision at the entrance to Tampa Bay resulted in a spill of more than 300,000 gallons that reached Pinellas beaches as far away as 14 miles and resulted in a 45% drop in tourism and a $5 billion economic loss over the following two years; and

WHEREAS, offshore drilling spills are a significant threat to the beaches that 95% of Pinellas tourists say are one of the top reasons they come to Florida, to Pinellas County's tourism expenditures that amount to $6.6 billion annually, to the State of Florida's tourism that amounts to $60 billion annually; and that spills can be carried by Gulf of Mexico currents to miles of coastline on both the east and west coasts of Florida; and

WHEREAS, hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico are a fact of life and can result in spills—as did Hurricanes Katrina and Rita near Louisiana in 2005, where hundreds of platforms and pipelines were destroyed and nearly three-quarters of a million gallons of oil and petroleum products were spilled from rigs, platforms and pipelines; and