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Representative Willhite Files Bill to Update Charter to the Port of Palm Beach

Wellington, Fla. – House **Representative Matt Willhite (D-Wellington)** files **HB 915**, updating the Port of Palm Beach’s charter to make it consistent with the size and scope of the of the Port’s daily operations. The Port of Palm Beach District is an independent special taxing district, established under provisions of Florida Law. Located in Palm Beach County, the Port covers a land area of 971 square miles, or roughly 50% of the county area. The Port of Palm Beach District has statutory authority to levy ad valorem millage tax, but has not done so since 1975.

After filing this legislation, **Representative Willhite** issued the following statement.

“The Port of Palm Beach is an economic engine for South Florida. Thousands of people rely on the Port of Palm Beach for work, making it one of Palm Beach County’s largest employers. The Port exports 100% of the raw sugar that is produced in the Glades area, and has been an asset to our neighbors in the Caribbean, especially when they have needed resources after natural disasters such as hurricanes. The Port of Palm Beach has been an asset to Palm Beach County for decades, and it is crucial that we do what we can to ensure the Port’s success.”

The Port of Palm Beach is the fourth busiest container port of Florida’s 15 deep-water ports. The Port and its tenants directly employ nearly 3,000 people. An additional 6,082 jobs are associated with importers and exporters using the port. This includes workers who are transporting locally harvested raw sugar and molasses from the Western communities in Palm Beach County. The Port contributes more than \$300 million in business revenue and \$12 million in state and federal taxes. Overall, over \$7 billion worth of commodities moves through the Port of Palm Beach each year.

The Port of Palm Beach is different from most ports in the United States in that it is an export port – approximately 80% of its cargo is exported. Because of the Port’s

role, it plays an important part in the balance of trade. The Port of Palm Beach is an essential lifeline to the island nations of the Caribbean – supplying 60% of everything consumed in the Bahamas.

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