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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT TO TAKE POSITION SUPPORTING UAE GRANT

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla., November 11, 2018** – As the City Council President and a retired senior military officer, I feel compelled to address some derogatory comments made by two City Council members at a public meeting on October 26, 2018 regarding the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Jacksonville's acceptance of grant money from that country. I also feel compelled to admonish the recent filing of legislation 2018-813. I see it as an attack on beliefs and religious freedoms. I want the residents of Jacksonville to understand that I do not support attacks on other faiths and ethnic populations. In my role as City Council President, there is no room for bias or prejudice. My expectation is that this legislation will quickly be defeated.

UAE is one of the United States' strongest and most reliable allies in the Middle East. The port of Jebel Ali in the UAE is the United States Navy's most visited port outside of the continental United States. UAE is also the only foreign country where the United States Airforce has the F-22 Raptor forward deployed. This is a powerful indication of trust by the Department of Defense in the UAE as a strong ally. There are over 5,000 active duty military personnel stationed within the country and over 60,000 US residents call UAE home. The United States has relied on UAE for support in all of the Mideast conflicts in the last 20 years including the Gulf War, Bosnian War, Afghan War, and War on ISIS. UAE has a remarkable record of worldwide philanthropic aid in the last 50 years by giving over \$60 billion to 178 different countries around the globe.

UAE has been very active in responding to natural disasters throughout the world. They assisted the United States following hurricanes Katrina, Harvey, Maria, and Irma. For Irma, UAE donated \$10 million in assistance. Of that, Jacksonville received \$2.7 million. That money is targeted to some of our hardest affected areas to repair homes, fund mobile medical clinics, upgrade computer labs at Ribault and Raines High Schools, and restore Charles Reese Park. I deeply appreciate UAE's assistance and the visit by the UAE ambassador in seeing the impact their aid will have.

We are at a critical point in our world's stability. We all must recognize diversity; respecting differences in religion and culture. We must respect our friends and neighbors, locally and around the globe. I expect my fellow City Council members to research, inquire, and prepare when they vote on legislation. There is always an option to ask for a deferral if a City Council member feels he or she needs more time to evaluate or gather additional information. The sponsoring City Council members

of legislation 2018-813 voted in the affirmative to the legislation accepting UAE assistance. Neither City Council member asked for a deferral. To come back after the fact and slander a highly respected ally of the United States is not acceptable.

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