



*Charlie
Crist*

A Guest Article from the **Governor of Florida**

Lower Property Taxes: The Next Step To Making Florida Affordable Again

As Florida's law enforcement officers, you are dedicated professionals who serve your communities well and fulfill the number-one role of government – to protect the public and keep our people safe. You face tremendous challenges and make thousands of sacrifices each and every day. In fact, you often put your commitment to the public above your own personal safety. For that, we honor you and thank you for protecting our people from those who would seek to harm our quality of life.

Unfortunately, many law enforcement officers – as well as other essential professionals such as firefighters, teachers and nurses – are struggling to live in the community they serve. Property values in Florida have soared during recent years, resulting in skyrocketing property taxes. The tremendous increase in property values and property taxes during the past six or seven years have put the American dream of homeownership out of reach for many who honorably serve Florida's communities. This situation is not right.

High property taxes have also hurt Florida's housing market. But January 29th can make a difference for Florida's homeowners – and for those who long to be homeowners, as well as for Florida's economy. No one can argue with the fact that Florida's homeowners have suffered under the weight of these taxes. Families have adjusted their budgets and changed their spending habits, just to make ends meet. As I speak to Floridians in every area of our state, they make it clear that they need relief.

To help provide relief, the Florida Legislature worked together last year to give the people of Florida the largest-ever tax cut in Florida history – \$15 billion over the next five years – when they rolled taxes back to last year's levels. Their action was just the first step. Now, the people of Florida have the opportunity to take another step. The constitutional amendment before Florida's voters on January 29th will cut property taxes even more – at least \$9 billion more. Together, these tax cuts add up to \$24 billion in property-tax cuts. This savings will provide relief to Florida's homeowners.

Growing families are holding back on selling their homes because they do not want to lose their current Save Our Homes property tax savings. Houses are slow to sell because prospective buyers fear higher property taxes. People are even changing their minds about moving to a smaller home because they learn that their property taxes would go up. The January 29th tax cut will make it possible

for homeowners to take their Save Our Homes savings with them to a different house.

People have lost the freedom to make the most basic choices about their lives because of property taxes. The portability of Save Our Homes will lower the assessed value of the new homestead – in many cases, by about half, depending on how long they have owned their current home.

In addition to helping homeowners who want to move, others will benefit, too. Doubling the homestead exemption will help everyone. Businesses will receive a new \$25,000 exemption for tangible personal property, which will create an ever better bottom line for our state. People who own second homes will be able to better predict property-tax costs because their property taxes will never increase more than 10 percent each year.

Clearly, more needs to be done. During 2008, the Legislature will consider additional steps. Also, the Tax and Budget Review Commission is considering ways to reform

and modernize Florida's tax structure. However, these opportunities are uncertain. That is why we should take advantage of the opportunity we have on January 29th to take the next step toward making Florida affordable again.

On January 29th, the power to lower property taxes is exactly where it should be – in the hands of the people of Florida. The tax-cut package will jump start Florida's housing market and make Florida even more business

friendly – which will generate more revenue for state and local governments and schools.

I appreciate the challenges local governments face in providing essential services while also lowering property taxes. I do not believe lower property taxes will mean less public safety. Responsible public officials will not put public safety at risk. They understand, as I do, that they must ensure the safety of their communities and, at the same time, provide relief from high property taxes.

I congratulate the Legislature for their leadership and determination to pass property-tax cuts. What they have done represents only the first step. Now, the power to provide relief rests in the hands of the people of Florida. The choice is up to you.

May God bless you and our great state and keep us safe.

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The Top Ten Signs You Need A Raise:

1. You did the math and realized it will take 20,000 hours of overtime to pay for one year of college for one of your kids.
2. You're seriously considering taking a position with a security firm that will pay you 20 percent more than you make now to work in Kazakhstan.
3. The last time you could afford to take your wife out for dinner and movie, E.T. was playing in theaters.
4. You're actively pushing for a take-home car program because your Gremlin was repossessed.
5. Your body armor allowance is eight-five whole dollars.
6. You live in Port Orange and you're taking the family for a two-day vacation to Daytona.
7. You were alarmed to find out there's no such thing as a fourth mortgage.
8. The under-paid public servant routine is wearing thin on your wife's wealthy father.
9. Your oldest just graduated from college and you immediately hit her up for a loan.
10. You're a rookie with the NYPD.

PBA DEATH & DISABILITY PLAN

By Glenda Kelly



For participating PBA Charters and Chapters, members are eligible for coverage through the Florida PBA Heart Fund, a charitable organization (see page 25 for more details). The benefits include: Disability Benefits to officers permanently and totally disabled due to a catastrophic injury while in actual performance of their duties (\$20,000); Death benefits for officers killed in the actual performance of their duties (\$30,000); and all benefits are payable to either the officer, spouse, or dependent children. Please contact Glenda Kelly, (glenda@flpba.org), 1-800-733-3722, extension 426 for more information.