

*Charlie
Crist*

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

Legislative Session Ensures Top Tier Issues

As you are aware, we recently finished the legislative session, and even though we are facing challenging economic times with fewer dollars, we were able to accomplish some very important milestones for the people of Florida. It is clearly easier to govern and legislate during better economic times when more dollars are available to meet the needs of the people, but I must applaud the great work of **Senate President Ken Pruitt** and **House Speaker Marco Rubio**. They passed a budget that does not raise taxes, yet ensures the top tier issues that are most important to Floridians – public safety, education, our environment and protection for the most vulnerable among us.

According to our country's Constitution, it is government's first priority to ensure the "domestic tranquility" – or the safety and security of our people. No one is more important to protecting our state than Florida's law enforcement officers. You are our first line of defense when it comes to protecting our neighborhoods and communities. Every day you put your lives on the line in order to serve and protect our people. We could never say "thank you" enough for all you do.

In a year when some state legislatures considered reducing their prison populations by releasing prisoners early, the Florida Legislature focused on our top priorities and approved plans to add more than 10,000 prison beds. This action ensures that we will have adequate prison capacity for the next three years and that inmates continue to serve at least 85 percent of their sentences.

I am grateful to Florida's troopers, law enforcement and correctional officers for your continued service and dedication to ensuring the safety of all Floridians and visitors to our state. You recognize that public service is a high calling and have committed to living by a higher standard than most people.

I also applaud the Legislature for coming together to create common-sense legislation requiring little to no taxpayer dollars and will serve the people of Florida well. One such law was the idea of **Jack Davis**, an 11-year-old boy from South Florida. He saw food being thrown away at a restaurant and wondered why it couldn't be used to feed people who suffered from under nourishment. He contacted one of his legislators, and the result is a law that makes it easier for restaurants to donate food, without fear of lawsuits. I commend young Jack for taking action and making a difference for his fellow man.

I am also particularly proud of the *Cover Florida* plan, which will provide affordable health insurance for Floridians age 19 to 64 who have not had coverage for at least six months. Currently, 3.8 million Floridians – or one in five – goes to bed at night worried about how to pay for medical care because they do not have health insurance coverage. Now, Floridians will have options that will free them from worrying about health care – and we are able to do it with no taxpayer dollars.

By negotiating with health insurers – and allowing them to compete for our business – the people of Florida will be the winners. For about \$150 per month, benefits will include regular medical checkups, coverage for preventive services, outpatient and inpatient surgery, urgent care and prescription drugs – plus other services. The plan will be available as early as January 2009 and will be a model for the nation.

Many of our state's law enforcement officers continue to struggle under the high cost of property taxes and property insurance. I continue to work with the Legislature and every avenue possible to make sure we are addressing these challenges and keeping Florida affordable and the American dream of homeownership alive. To help ensure this dream

becomes a reality for more Floridians, more than 2,000 families will receive help purchasing a home, while homeowners facing foreclosure will benefit from new protections created in response to recommendations from the Florida Home Ownership Promotes the Economy Task Force I created to address the dramatic increase of foreclosures in the Sunshine State. In November, voters will have the option

of reducing property taxes on average by about 25 percent in exchange for a one-percent sales tax increase. Additionally, homeowners will receive added protections from property insurance companies – and Citizens customers will receive a rate freeze until 2010.

These items are just a glimpse of the benefits to the people of Florida as a result of the legislative session. Other items include health insurance coverage for autism, bonuses to the state's best educators in participating districts and schools and to teachers who receive national certification, and a green energy package that protects our natural resources, stimulates our economy and reduces our dependence on foreign oil.

It is an honor to serve the people of Florida, and may God bless our law enforcement officers and keep them safe. 🇺🇸

***"You are our first
line of defense...
We could never say
'thank you' enough
for all you do."***

A man goes to a doctor for a physical checkup. The nurse starts with certain basic items.

"How much do you weigh?" she asks.

"One-seventy."

The nurse puts him on the scale. It turns out that his weight is 193.

The nurse asks, "Your height?"

"Five-eleven."

The nurse checks and sees that he's only 5' 8½".

She then takes his blood pressure, and it's very high.

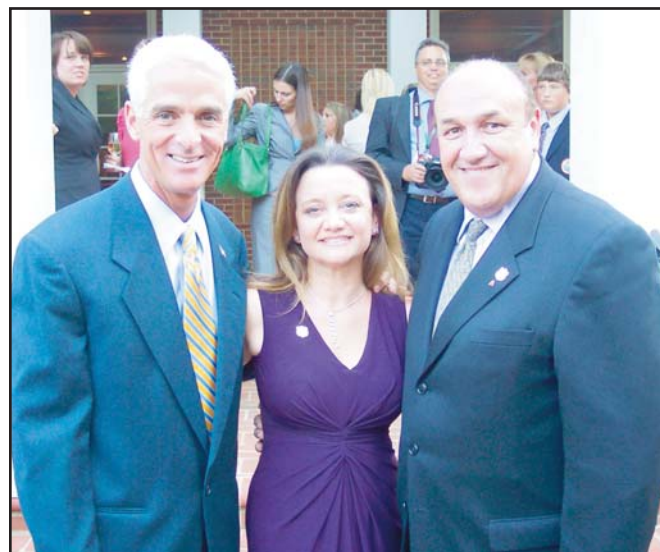
The man explains, "Of course it's high! When I came in here, I was tall and wiry. Now, I'm short and dumpy."

A woman accompanied her husband when he went to get a haircut. Reading a magazine, she found a hairstyle she liked for herself, and asked the receptionist if she could take the magazine next door to make a copy of the photo.

"Leave some ID—a driver's license or a credit card," the receptionist said.

"But my husband is here getting a haircut," she explained.

"Yes," she explained. "But I need something you'll come back for."



Governor Charlie Crist, Dade County PBA Assistant General Counsel Simone Labrador and Florida PBA President John Rivera at the Governor's Mansion.



L-R: FHP Chapter President Bill Smith, Florida CPO Chapter President Richard Gordon, Governor Crist, FDLEAA Chapter President Telly Sands, SCO Chapter President Jim Baiardi, and SLEO Chapter President Matt Tyre at the Governor's Mansion.