

A Message from Florida's Attorney General

A Thank You To Governor Bush and A Look To The Future



*Charlie
Crist
Attorney General
and
Candidate for
Governor*

**The Florida PBA
has endorsed
Charlie Crist as
the Republican
Candidate for
Governor.**

**If you would like
to help with
Charlie Crist's
Campaign, see
page 3.**

Eight years ago, Floridians chose who they wanted to lead this state into the 21st Century. One candidate was running on a platform of bold ideas and long-term solutions to problems. With the support of the membership of the PBA and others, Florida made the wise decision to elect **Jeb Bush** as our Governor.

Without hesitation, I can say that he is America's greatest Governor. Others, both within and outside of Florida, are saying the same. All he needed was a chance to put his many ideas into action, and he has not disappointed those who elected him to represent their interests.

The nature of his job prevented Governor Bush from being able to focus solely on implementing new ideas. He also faced many difficult moments when disaster struck, and there is no doubt he handled this duty as few would have managed. Florida's success at being prepared when eight hurricanes visited us over a two-year period is deservedly held up as a national model.

We are now into another hurricane season. The experts predict that it will not be as bad as the past two record-breaking years—but as we all know, the experts are sometimes wrong. However, if just one major storm hits our state, the resulting loss of life and property damage can be devastating.

This fact is certainly not lost on Florida's first responders, who know that loss of life can be minimized or eliminated if those who live in mandatory evacuation zones heed the warnings to move to safety. Unfortunately, some residents simply refuse to leave. The job of knocking on the doors of the unwilling falls to the brave men and women of law enforcement, sometimes at your own risk.

Governor Bush and I both understand, and appreciate, the role of law enforcement both before and after havoc strikes. You save lives before the storm; afterward, you provide great assistance in our efforts to ensure that storm victims are not doubly victimized by price gougers who seek to profit from their misery.

Florida law requires us to take action if evidence of illegal profiteering is taking place once an emergency has been declared. The law also requires occupational licenses for those who are providing cleanup and restoration services.

Over the past two years, we have seen numerous examples of law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office working together. We have been alerted by local law enforcement to roadside merchants offering items such as empty gas cans for \$169 and generators for more than triple their value.

In turn, we have alerted law enforcement to individuals who offer questionable repair work

without proper licenses. The cooperation and communication between us has helped countless Floridians better cope with their plight. Rest assured that the same spirit of cooperation will prevail in 2006.

By the time the next legislative session arrives in March, a new Governor will be working with the people's representatives. With your help, I plan to be that person. I am grateful for your past support during previous campaigns and throughout my service as an elected public official. So, too, I am sure, is Governor Bush. Look what we have achieved together over the last decade.

In 1995 we were able to pass the Stop Turning Out Prisoners (S.T.O.P.) legislation, which ended the practice of "gain time" and forced prisoners to serve at least 85% of their sentences. Right before S.T.O.P. became law, Florida prison inmates were serving an average of just 61.6% of their sentences; in April of this year, that figure had climbed to

85.4%. That meant additional months, even years, before some of you might be required to again face the truly bad apples on the streets of our state.

S.T.O.P. was the most important piece of legislation I sponsored as a state Senator, both for the safety it provided to the citizens of Florida and for its benefits to law enforcement officers. When we tried to pass S.T.O.P., there were many critics who believed it was too expensive to build more prisons to hold these criminals. Thankfully, law and order—and common sense—carried the day.

Governor Bush's "10-20-Life" proposal put the responsibility for gun crimes where it belongs: on those whose fingers are on the triggers. The concept of a long prison sentence for the use of a gun in the commission of a crime was something whose time had come. Again, both the public and law enforcement became much safer once these types of criminals were taken off the street for long periods of time.

The results of these and other safety measures are recorded in black and white. Florida is now enjoying a 34-year low in the crime rate. We have every right to be pleased, but we cannot be satisfied with this. There is still work to do.

At the top of my "to do" list, should I become your next Governor, is a piece of legislation we have worked on together. You have shared my commitment to the Anti-Murder Act because you agree that we cannot allow probation violators to continue thumbing their noses at the system with impunity. The consequences are so dire.

I have worked with numerous fine legislators over the past two years to pass this legislation, which would lock up probation violators who have violent pasts until a judge certifies that they are not a danger to society. The PBA's support of our effort and that of public safety-minded legislators has been deeply appreciated.

We simply cannot allow people like **Joseph Smith**, who killed **Carlle Brucia**, and those accused in the murders of 9-year-old **Jessica Lunsford**, 13-year-old **Sarah Lunde** and the six young people in Deltona to roam the streets after violating the privilege of probation. The last issue of *Roll Call* captured my feelings, and those of others who are highly interested in public safety, on this important piece of legislation.

The good news is that the House of Representatives passed Anti-Murder during the 2006 legislative session by a 115-0 vote. Unfortunately, the Senate did not bring the measure to the floor for a vote. Critics once again say the cost is prohibitive, even though in reality the cost amounts to about eight (8) one-hundredths of one percent of our state's \$74 billion budget.

Remember, the nay-sayers also said S.T.O.P. was too expensive, but the dramatic drop in the crime rate shows that the cost would have been too high if we had NOT passed it. It's normal human nature to mention what we achieved and omit where we fell short. However, I choose to discuss Anti-Murder because it is so important and I will not rest until it is passed.

If elected Florida's next Governor, I will make the Anti-Murder Act the first piece of legislation I sign. How can I be that confident? Because I will sign no other bill until Anti-Murder lands on my desk. It's that simple. With the PBA's continued support, I am confident we will get the bill through both chambers and signed into law next year. And I plan to reserve a very special place at the signing ceremony for the PBA.

Other public safety steps need to be taken. Among other initiatives, I am proposing a zero tolerance for sexual predators and offenders and Cyber criminals. Law enforcement should receive continuing education training on the growing trend of electronic media being used to victimize children. A Chief Child Advocate and an Office of Child Abuse Prevention will be part of my administration. The War on Drugs will continue and will include an offensive against the problems surrounding methamphetamine abuse—an offensive necessary to protect our children.

I look forward to working with you on these and other important public safety matters, and I thank you for your past support and for all you do for the people of Florida. ●



PBA joins Attorney General Charlie Crist and Representative Joe Negron at the Anti-Murder Act rally.