



A Message from Your PBA Endorsed Gubernatorial Candidate

*Charlie
Crist
Attorney General
and
Candidate for
Governor*

*The Florida PBA
has endorsed
Charlie Crist
for Governor.*

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

In my campaign to be Florida's next Governor, I have placed the highest priority on the issue of public safety. Government has no higher duty to its citizens than keeping them safe, and that is what I work on every day as Attorney General.

The Founding Fathers recognized government's primary role. They thought it so important that in the very first line of the U.S. Constitution — just 18 words into a 4,400-word document — they declared that one of the fundamental reasons for government is to “insure domestic tranquility.”

So it has been rather surprising to hear my opponents question why I would place such a heavy emphasis on law-and-order issues. After all, they point out, Florida's index crime rate is the lowest in 35 years. So why, they ask, would I emphasize an area where things are going so well?

What these critics fail to understand is that it is precisely because Florida has enjoyed so much success against criminals that we must continue, and build on, the initiatives that brought us to this point.

Our support of the brave men and women of law enforcement cannot, and must not, diminish now that their efforts are working. Our commitment to apprehending, prosecuting and imprisoning offenders cannot, and must not, weaken now that sentencing laws really mean something. Our dedication to the law-abiding citizens of Florida cannot, and must not, be reduced.

The main target of my opponents' criticism is the proposal I call the Anti-Murder Act. You may be familiar with the proposal, and I am extremely proud that the PBA and other law enforcement organizations have endorsed this measure since I first proposed it in 2005.

The Anti-Murder Act will require that violent offenders who then violate probation must remain in jail until a judge finds that they do not pose a danger to the community. I have already made it clear that as Governor, I will sign no other piece of legislation until the Florida Legislature sends the Anti-Murder Act to my desk.

Simply put, violent criminals who abuse the privilege of probation should not be given the opportunity to prey on Florida's citizens. Yet the critics refuse to get behind this common-sense proposal. Their reason: They think Florida can't afford it.

For those of us in the criminal justice community, that's an argument we've heard time and time again. And each time, it has been dead wrong.

In 1987, newly elected **Governor Bob Martinez** inherited a prison system that was bursting at the seams. He proposed a massive prison construction program, but his critics said the state couldn't afford to build or operate so many prisons. They were wrong, and the new prison beds helped reduce crime.

Thanks to early release programs, in early 1995 Florida inmates were serving an average of only 61 percent of their sentences. In response, I sponsored the S.T.O.P. legislation to (as its name said) Stop Turning Out Prisoners. Once again the critics whined that the state couldn't afford the additional prison space that would be needed. And once again they were wrong. The results were nothing short of dramatic. Just three years after the law was enacted, prisoners were serving an average of 73 percent of their sentences, and today they are serving an average of more than 86 percent of their sentences—the highest percentage of actual time served by inmates in Florida prisons in several decades.

In 1999, handgun crime was a serious concern in Florida. **Governor Jeb Bush** proposed the 10-20-Life law to toughen

the penalties for those who used handguns while committing a crime. Predictably, the Governor's political foes said the law would require expensive new prison beds, and the state couldn't afford it. And, predictably, they were wrong yet again—the state has managed the demand for prison space, and the law-abiding citizens of Florida are safer than they have been in many years.

Now I am proposing the Anti-Murder Act, and the same opponents are raising the same tired argument that Florida cannot afford the prison beds it would require. You would think they would have learned by now, but apparently not.



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

We have already lost **Carlie Brucia, Jessica Lunsford, Sarah Lunde**, and six young adults in Deltona — **Erin Belanger, Francisco Roman, Jonathan Gleason, Roberto Gonzalez, Michelle Nathan and Anthony Vega**. All of these Floridians were just starting down their life's path when they were brutally murdered by violent felony offenders who were walking the streets even though they had violated the terms of their probation.

The hard truth is that Florida cannot afford not to pass the Anti-Murder Act.

And there is more—much more—that we will accomplish together if I am fortunate enough to be elected Florida's next Governor.

One of my first duties after inauguration will be to propose a state budget for the next fiscal year. While it is impossible to know at this point what that budget proposal will look like, it is certain

to include the highest possible level of support for law enforcement officers and other first responders. Pay rates, equipment and support resources should all be enhanced as much as possible.

One area that often gets overlooked for law enforcement officers is the matter of affordable housing. I believe that every officer should have the opportunity to live in the community he or she serves, yet many cannot do so because of rising property values. Increasing salaries for veteran officers and ensuring one of the best retirement programs in the country is a personal priority so that officers are not shut out of the market.

A Crist Administration will be deeply committed to stopping drugs from destroying individuals and neighborhoods, to increasing protection against internet predators and cyber criminals, to maintaining the death penalty as both punishment and a strong deterrent and to establishing a zero tolerance policy for sexual predators and sexual offenders. We will also strengthen efforts to prevent child abuse, including establishment of an Office of Child Abuse Prevention within the Governor's Office and a chief child advocate for the state.

These things, and more, represent an ambitious agenda—and one that I fully intend to implement. The men and women of law enforcement in general, and the members of the PBA in particular, have been a tremendous ally in my efforts over the years as a state Senator, state Education Commissioner and Attorney General.

I look forward to working with you for many more years to come, and ask for your support and your vote in the upcoming election. Together, we can continue to do great things for the law-abiding citizens who look to us to insure their domestic tranquility. ■



Northwest Florida PBA with Charlie Crist sign waving at an intersection.