



Charlie
Crist

A Guest Article from the Governor of Florida

Governor Crist Signs Laws To Protect, Aid Law Enforcement

The safety and security of Floridians and their families is the most important responsibility of government. I am grateful to all of Florida's law enforcement officers for working with such dedication to maintain that safety on a daily basis. It is a challenging task in a state as large and populous as ours, and your vigilance and bravery is the mark of true public service.

As governor, I am determined to make sure we first take care of the services that matter most to Floridians. Public safety is one of those services. Here in Florida, we remain committed to upholding justice and keeping criminals off the streets.

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. But as elected officials, we can work to give you the protection and tools you need to protect our citizens and visitors.

With that in mind, I signed several pieces of legislation this summer that increase protections for Florida law enforcement officers – and give them better crime-fighting tools. The Law Enforcement Protection Act, House Bill 321, ensures that inmates convicted of crimes against law enforcement officers serve life in prison with no opportunity for early release. House Bill 61 extends the current prohibition against a citizen's use of violence to resist an arrest to include virtually any legal duty undertaken by a law enforcement officer so long as it is undertaken in good faith. I also signed an executive order that creates an alert system, similar to the Amber Alert system for missing children, to alert the public to suspects wanted for injuring or killing law enforcement officers. The "Officer Down" alert will allow the citizens who depend on troopers, police

officers and sheriff's deputies to have a role in apprehending the criminals who harm them.

I also have signed into law several measures that will help law enforcement do their job of fighting crime, protecting victims, and apprehending criminals. House Bill 313, the Barwick-Ruschak Act, allows law enforcement officers to offer the same help to victims of dating violence that is already afforded to domestic violence victims. House Bill 85 requires a mandatory 25-year prison sentence for anyone convicted of a second lewd or lascivious conduct on a child under age 12. House Bill 43 provides an array of law enforcement tools to combat gang violence and establishes tougher penalties for those convicted of gang activity.

We also are cracking down on those who cultivate marijuana in Florida's neighborhoods. Through House Bill 173, law enforcement officers now can use photographs as evidence of growing equipment – eliminating the need to store large pieces of growing equipment in your county facilities. The law also increases the penalties for owning a grow house by lowering the threshold for a third-degree felony and making it a first-degree felony if minors are present in the structure.

As we begin to prepare for the 2009 legislative session, I look forward to the opportunity to further strengthen the laws and procedures that law enforcement officers depend on to keep our streets, neighborhoods, and businesses safe. The job of combating crime is one that never stops, and I commend Florida's troopers, law enforcement, correctional and correctional probation officers for your continued service and dedication. Public service is a calling that requires commitment and bravery, and you deserve great praise for your work.

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

"We could never say 'thank you' enough for all you do."

IRS TAX TIP: IR-2008-106

Tax Credit to Aid First-Time Home- buyers; Must Be Repaid Over 15 Years

September 16, 2008

WASHINGTON — First-time homebuyers should begin planning now to take advantage of a new tax credit included in the recently enacted Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.

Available for a limited time only, the credit:

- Applies to home purchases after April 8, 2008, and before July 1, 2009.
- Reduces a taxpayer's tax bill or increases his or her refund, dollar for dollar.
- Is fully refundable, meaning that the credit will be paid out to eligible taxpayers, even if they owe no tax or the credit is more than the tax that they owe.

However, the credit operates much like an interest-free loan, because it must be repaid over a 15-year period. So, for example, an eligible taxpayer who buys a home today and properly claims the maximum available credit of \$7,500 on his or her 2008 federal income tax return must begin repaying the credit by including one-fifteenth of this amount, or \$500, as an additional tax on his or her 2010 return.

Eligible taxpayers will claim the credit on new IRS Form 5405. This form, along with further instructions on claiming the first-time homebuyer credit, will be included in 2008 tax forms and instructions and be available later this year on IRS.gov, the IRS Web site.

If you bought a home recently, or are considering buying one, please go to the link below and you will find questions to help you determine whether you qualify for the credit. In addition, you will find information on repayment.

[www.irs.gov/newsroom/
article/0,,id=186831,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=186831,00.html)



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