



*Bill Nelson  
U.S. Senator*

*I am proud to represent Floridians in the U.S. Senate, where one of my goals is to make sure our state receives its fair share of federal funds. These funds give our cities and communities the tools necessary to improve the quality of life for all Floridians. And as law enforcement now plays a greater role in the fight against terror, I understand the importance of making sure you receive adequate federal resources.*

*U.S. Senator Bill Nelson is a member of the Senate's Armed Services, Finance, Commerce, Intelligence, Aging and Budget Committees.*

*From Washington D. C.*

# Legislative News for PBA

## Ban Distracted Driving

In September 2008, a truck driver in Ocala looked down at his ringing cell phone. Within a few seconds of being distracted, he plowed into a stopped school bus, killing **Francis Margay Schee**. She was only 13 years old. Unfortunately, senseless tragic accidents like this one occur very often. As much as 16 percent of motor vehicle related fatalities and 22 percent of motor vehicle related injuries in 2008 alone were attributable to distracted driving. The cause behind these accidents is a completely preventable one, and I believe that it is time to take a serious step towards ensuring that our roads are safe from its dangerous consequences.

Any form of distracted or impaired driving makes the road more dangerous for everyone. Distracted driving can include anything that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel or your mind off what you are doing while driving. Texting while driving is of great concern because it involves all three forms of distraction. Recent studies have concluded that texting while driving is potentially even more dangerous than driving under the influence of alcohol. In 2008 alone, distracted drivers killed 5,870 people and injured 515,000 people.

As both cell phone usage and text messaging while driving has increased from year to year, the proportion of vehicle fatalities associated with driver distraction has also risen. In a 2009 poll conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 67 percent of drivers self-reported using a cell phone while driving, and 21 percent reported that they send and receive text messages while driving. In 2008, an

estimated 11 percent of all vehicles on the road had drivers who were using some type of phone (either hand-held or hands-free). With continued growth in the use of cell phones, smartphones and PDA's, distracted driving—if left unchecked—will also continue to increase.

Our youngest drivers are particularly at risk for fatalities caused by distracted driving. Combining their lack of driving experience with cell phone use and frequent texting has resulted in drivers under the age of 20 having the highest proportion of distracted driving crashes.

This is why I'm a co-sponsor of S.1938, The Distracted Driving Prevention Act of 2009, which creates a state grant program to reward states that enact a complete ban on texting while driving and prohibit driving while using a cell phone without a hands-free device. The bill would require the Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations for commercial vehicle drivers and school bus drivers on the use of wireless devices or other distracting devices. This bill would also

create a national advertising and education campaign to educate drivers on the dangers of distracted driving and provide funding to enforce the distracted driving law. S. 1938 is pending before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. I am privileged to serve on this committee in the Senate. Many states have banned some, if not all, forms of distracted driving and I am hopeful that the Florida legislature will, too, ban distracted driving.

Let's work together to stop the needless loss of life and injuries caused by distracted driving. Thank you for your service to our great state of Florida. ●

***"In 2008 alone, distracted drivers killed 5,870 people and injured 515,000 people."***



*Jim Spearing*

*A Message From Your*

# Political Consultant

## Loyalty... It Still Matters

With the historic decision by **Governor Charlie Crist** to run for the United States Senate as an independent, many of my more ardent Republican friends have been screaming for his head on a stick. Many have confronted me over the past month or so demanding to know why the Florida PBA does not renounce him by withdrawing our endorsement (as you may know, any Republican consultants working for Crist quit for fear of ever working again).

Our answer is simple... loyalty.

The Florida PBA was the first major group to endorse Crist when he ran for the Florida Senate and "Chain Gang" Charlie did not disappoint. To the contrary, he was a steady, vocal and dogged supporter of law enforcement officers and their families in the legislature. He continued to receive our support for Education Commissioner, Attorney General, and Governor and can count on our vigorous support for his current bid.

Loyalty matters. Imagine the impression we would leave on our friends and enemies alike if we were to put our fingers in the wind and withdraw our endorsement when

politically expedient. No one in political life could trust us again.

Speaking of loyalty, many in the media and campaign circles were surprised by PBA's endorsement of Democrat **Alex Sink** for Governor. I can understand their confusion.

After all, no labor organization in Florida has been more loyal to the Republican Party than PBA. PBA endorsed **Jeb Bush**, for example, in the face of a sitting governor (**Chiles**), and we suffered four long years in the legislative dog house for our trouble. In fact, this is the first time in 20 years the PBA has endorsed a Democrat for Florida's highest office.

Despite this proven record of faithfulness, the PBA of late has been treated no better than the traditional adversaries of the Republican Party. We find ourselves, after years of steadfast support for Republican candidates, fighting for our lives as they try to slash your pensions, gut your health care and refuse, for the fifth year in a row, to make pay raises a priority.

It's enough to make you angry. Isn't it? Till next time, stay safe out there. ●