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## **Governor Crist Signs 2009-10 Budget to Maintain Investments in Florida's Future**

*~ Applauds Legislature's hard work and commitment to moving Florida's economy forward ~*

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TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today signed the \$66.5 billion 2009-10 budget, praising the Florida Legislature for putting together a budget that preserves Florida's investment in economic development, education and public safety.

"The budget I signed today contains no broad-based tax increases, no early release of inmates, and no drastic layoffs of employees," Governor Crist said. "Instead, it continues the forward movement of Florida's economy by maintaining critical services to Florida's most vulnerable, investments in Florida's classrooms, teachers and students, and the safety and security of our communities."

Governor Crist highlighted the following budget items:

### **STRENGTHENING FLORIDA'S ECONOMY**

Governor Crist is committed to strengthening Florida's economy through investments in targeted business sectors. The Governor highlighted the following economic development initiatives:

- **Quick Action Closing Fund** – This program provides \$13.5 million in incentives to recruit and retain high-impact industries that provide high wage jobs. During the current budget year, economic development projects led to the creation/retention of 17,316 jobs at an average annual wage of \$56,334.
- **Film** – \$10.8 million will fund efforts to attract, maintain, and help grow the state's film and entertainment industry. Since first being funded in 2004-05, the state has invested \$44.8 million in film and entertainment incentives that have resulted in 117 productions that have spent more than \$301 million on qualified Florida wages, businesses and services that met the strict parameters of the program. The 38,290 jobs created by these productions put \$183.2 million in wages into the pockets of Floridians. Revenues to Florida businesses exceeded \$118 million and 83,852 hotel room stays were generated.

- **VISIT FLORIDA** – \$25 million for VISIT FLORIDA, the state’s official tourism marketing organization. VISIT FLORIDA works in partnership with the tourism industry to promote the state as a premier tourist destination and has many programs to help the state's numerous tourism businesses and destinations market themselves more effectively and affordably.

## GETTING FLORIDIANS BACK TO WORK

Last week, Florida experienced its first unemployment rate improvement in more than three years. Florida’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for April 2009 is 9.6 percent, which is 0.2 percent lower than the revised March rate. To assist Floridians seeking employment or desiring to grow their careers, Governor Crist highlighted the following workforce initiatives included in the budget:

- **Employment and Training** – Reemploying Floridians who have suffered job loss in a contracting economy is a major priority. A total of \$455.1 million will provide employment services and career education to Florida’s workforce and a pathway to increased productivity, career advancement and economic prosperity. The budget includes \$104.6 million in federal recovery dollars to benefit the immediate reemployment needs of Floridians. Governor Crist encourages Floridians seeking employment or to improve their careers to visit Florida’s job matching Web site [www.EmployFlorida.com](http://www.EmployFlorida.com), which the Governor has highlighted on his visits around the state.
- **Ready to Work** – Funding of \$7 million is provided for the Ready to Work program to help ensure job-seekers of all ages obtain the skills needed to excel in the workplace. Through the Ready to Work program, employers such as Shands Jacksonville and Lockheed Martin have reduced turnover among new employees, reduced training costs and given long-time employees the opportunity to learn more and earn more.
- **Employment and Training** – Florida’s unemployed can be confident that the services and benefits they need to endure very difficult circumstances are available to them. An additional \$125.1 million will ensure timely processing and payment of an estimated \$7.2 billion in unemployment compensation benefit payments in Fiscal Year 2009-10. Each dollar in unemployment compensation benefits paid by the state results in an estimated \$1.64 in positive economic benefits to residents and businesses, approximately \$11.8 billion into Florida’s economy, which will consequently sustain jobs and restore consumer confidence. In total, federal recovery dollars will provide \$3.55 billion of increased unemployment compensation benefits aiding Florida’s citizens and the economy during the 2009-10 budget year.

## **PROTECTING K-12 EDUCATION**

- **Increasing Per-Student Funding** – Total Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding is \$17.9 billion or \$6,870.77 per student, for a total of \$21.7 billion for K-12 education. This is a per-student increase of \$25.91, or 0.38 percent, over the previous year's funding. Additionally, Governor Crist has worked to maximize funding for Florida's public schools in tight economic times.

Governor Crist also noted that a ratified compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida will further maximize funding for K-12 education. Governor Crist has until August 31, 2009, to negotiate an agreement based on the guidelines developed by the Legislature.

- **Saving Teaching Positions** – Governor Charlie Crist thanked Florida's school district officials, the Florida Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education for their swift inclusion of stimulus dollars into local school district budgets, resulting in hundreds of saved teaching positions throughout the state. The 2009-10 budget includes \$907.9 million in federal stimulus funding, which will help stabilize school district operations, preventing 18,000 potential layoffs.

"Thousands of Floridians, including students, school system employees and their families are benefiting from the stimulus dollars, which are helping to restore stability to Florida's teaching workforce," said Governor Crist. "In challenging economic times, this funding has provided the safety net we need to ensure our students continue to receive the quality education they deserve."

## **ENSURING SAFETY AND SECURITY**

All public safety agencies are fully funded at \$4.75 billion, including \$5 million in federal stimulus funding that will update radio equipment at Florida's correctional institutions from low band to 800MHz. This investment will add to the safety and well being of the correctional officers who risk their lives each day.

At a time when states are scrambling to address budget shortfalls and considering balancing budgets at the expense of citizen safety, Governor Crist is committed to avoiding massive pay and personnel cuts or turning dangerous criminals out to the streets.

Governor Crist emphasized that the 2009-10 budget does not release prisoners early and contains no pay cuts or layoffs of state law enforcement investigators or the correctional and probation officers that oversee our state's 100,000 prison inmates and 120,000 probationers.

## **PROTECTING STATE EMPLOYEES**

Governor Crist vetoed the mandatory salary reduction for state employees earning more than \$45,000 annually. While allowing the budget reduction to remain in state agency budgets, Governor Crist instead will direct agency heads under his purview to manage their salary spending by using their legal authority under section 216.292, Florida Statutes. The statute gives agency heads the flexibility to meet their budget needs by transferring funds from other budget categories. Other steps that may be taken include holding positions vacant and reducing or eliminating non-essential travel and purchases. The Governor also encouraged Cabinet agencies and the Judicial Branch to adopt a similar approach.

“I believe now is not the best time to reduce state employees’ pay – especially as we are seeing many signs that our economy is beginning to turn around,” Governor Crist said. “It has been my hope that we would not have to take millions of dollars out of the pockets of 28,000 people throughout our state.”

## **RESTORING FLORIDA’S EVERGLADES**

The 2009-10 budget includes \$50 million to maintain Florida’s investment in securing the future of the Everglades and water conservation. Governor Crist requested the funds to continue the restoration of the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers. The funding assures continued efforts to restore a more natural water flow and improve water quality and supports the coalition of federal, state and local leaders, along with agricultural and environmental stakeholders, who are committed to restoring the natural beauty of the “River of Grass” through the 39-year Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the state’s efforts to restore the Northern Everglades.

Governor Crist also applauded the Legislature for taking action to allow the *Florida Forever* program to continue to move forward with the ability to issue bonds for up to \$250 million as currently authorized.

## **FUNDING CANCER RESEARCH**

Governor Crist approved the tobacco surcharge that will result in increased funding in a wide variety of health and human services areas, including cancer research, up to \$50 million per year. The National Cancer Institute ranks Florida second in the nation for the number of new cancer patients, as well as the number of cancer deaths. Cancer research has proven a connection between tobacco use and the development of certain types of cancer.

“Every Floridian has been touched by cancer. In fact, in Florida and across our nation, cancer is the second leading cause of death,” Governor Crist said. “I am proud that the budget I signed today will help support cancer research that will find better treatments, and one day maybe even a cure for this dreaded disease.”

Since 2006, the William G. “Bill” Bankhead Jr. and David Coley Cancer Research Program has supported cancer research in Florida, and the James and Ester King Program has supported biomedical research. To date, 60 scientists and clinicians on four teams are involved in research for lymphoma, skin, prostate, and colorectal cancers. In addition, the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to prevent and cure cancer. To date, more than 100 patients per day visit the center to receive cancer screenings and treatments.

“The tobacco policy reflected in this budget will save lives and protect kids,” said Paul Hull, vice president of advocacy and public policy for the American Cancer Society, Florida Division. “Investing a fair portion of the tobacco-generated dollars in cancer research clearly shows the wisdom of this Governor and this Legislature.”

In addition to generating research funds, the tobacco surcharge will improve public health and result in an overall decrease in health care costs. The surcharge will discourage smoking among adults and children and help reduce cancer and chronic diseases directly related to tobacco use and second-hand smoke.

## **PROTECTING GUN RIGHTS**

Governor Crist vetoed the transfer of \$6 million away from Florida’s Concealed Weapons and Firearms Licensing Program. For the past 22 years, this self-sustaining program has been funded by fees paid by applicants for concealed weapons permits. Governor Crist reiterated his commitment to protecting individual gun rights for Floridians consistent with the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution.

For more information about the 2009-10 budget, please visit [www.FLGov.com/budget](http://www.FLGov.com/budget).

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