

GOVERNOR CRIST LAUNCHES "ACCELERATE FLORIDA: EXTENDING FLORIDA'S ECONOMIC HORIZONS"

~~ ~Directs state agencies to begin construction and capital outlay projects; State agencies to safely reduce burdensome regulation and remove barriers to employment ~ ~

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TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today charged state agencies to speed up billions of dollars in approved construction and capital outlay projects through expedited approval and contracting. The projects will boost Florida's economy by creating thousands of jobs while improving roads, schools, parks and waterways. Governor Crist also directed agencies to promote less intrusive, more effective government by identifying burdensome regulation and barriers to job creation.

Continuing his focus on strengthening Florida's economy, Governor Crist announced his **"Accelerate Florida: Extending Florida's Economic Horizons"** economic stimulus plan during a meeting with Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, leaders of state agencies and business representatives. In addition, the Governor directed Dale A. Brill, Ph.D., director of the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development (OTTED), to assemble **Accelerate Florida Think Tanks** to help identify ways that state government can remove barriers to economic growth and renewal.

"I am directing the state agencies under my purview to start turning dirt on projects that have already been funded by the Legislature and to identify and remove any obstacles that might be hindering these construction projects from getting under way," Governor Crist said. "My instructions represent an aggressive strategy for strengthening Florida's economy and thoroughly examining our options for the future."

Governor Crist also asked business leaders to provide suggestions for ways that government can remove burdensome regulation and requirements that stifle the entrepreneurial spirit and commerce. The following business representatives were on hand to share their suggestions with Governor Crist:

- Crit Smith of the title company Smith, Thompson, Shaw & Manausa
- Harold Uzzell, president of Uzzell Advertising
- John Medina, president of Greenways of America
- Richard Goldman, chairman of Visit Florida, the official tourism marketing corporation for the state of Florida
- Dr. James Ammons, president of Florida A&M University
- Mark Wilson, president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce

"Florida is feeling the effects of the economic adjustments that are impacting the nation, and we must listen to what business owners and industry leaders have to say," Governor Crist said.

"These challenging economic conditions require us to join together to aggressively focus available resources on activities that keep Floridians employed and move our economy forward."

“Government creates an environment that either makes or breaks business,” said John Medina, president of Greenways of America. “When government allows entrepreneurs and business to grow, we are better able to put people to work and keep our economy moving.”

Since January 2008, Enterprise Florida Inc. (EFI) has retained 4,017 jobs, compared to only 260 during January to August 2007. Additionally, during the next five months, EFI projects retaining another 3,618 jobs and creating 6,100 new high-wage, high-tech jobs.

Accelerating Construction Projects

“Going back 10 years and moving into the current budget year, we have \$28.6 billion in unspent construction dollars for new classrooms, better roads and needed water projects,” said Governor Crist. “Now is the time to make sure all of these projects are moving forward as quickly as possible.”

Governor Crist directed state agencies to expedite the following construction and capital outlay projects:

- **Florida Department of Transportation** – Acknowledging that maintaining, constructing, and expanding Florida’s transportation system contributes to the economic security, Governor Crist directed Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos to accelerate work on roadway projects worth \$4.2 billion this year, including \$1.4 billion for the Interstate-595 Express in South Florida and \$47.9 million for the Max Brewer Bridge repair in Titusville.

- **Florida Department of Education** – Commissioner Eric Smith and Sheila McDevitt, chairwoman of the Florida Board of Governors, will work with school district leaders and state university presidents to complete education construction projects as quickly as possible. During the past three years, the Legislature has set aside \$4.8 billion for school, community college and university construction, including \$1.5 billion this year alone.

- **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** – Secretary Michael Sole will initiate \$403 million in projects proposed by lawmakers during the 2008 legislative session and approved by Governor Crist with the expectation that construction could invigorate Florida’s economic activity. Funding will improve water quality and supply and provide surface water improvements. Another \$369 million is available for protection of Florida’s natural environment, enhancements to state parks and lands, and waste cleanup projects.

Other agencies receiving funds during the current fiscal year for construction projects and economic development include the following:

- **Florida Department of Corrections** – \$430 million to construct 10,200 prison beds and to finance a proposed prison work-camp at Bay County. Includes funds to manage and supervise inmates, which will create 1,395 new jobs.

- **Energy** – \$20 million to promote the production, distribution and use of renewable fuels, including the Department of Agriculture’s Farm to Fuel program.

- **Community Affairs and Workforce Development** – \$713.4 million

- o \$253.7 million to provide incentives to local and private organizations to produce and preserve affordable housing.

- o \$383.6 million to provide job training assistance to individuals and businesses, including workforce services to employers and job seekers and educational programs to help people with disabilities gain employment.

- o \$76.1 million to promote tourism, revitalize communities and prepare emergency facilities to protect citizens during emergency situations.

- **Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development** – \$185.6 million

- o \$20 million to support aerospace development and infrastructure.

o \$16.3 million to support military base protection and defense and rural related infrastructure projects.

o \$35.6 million to support tourism marketing and promotion efforts.

o \$113.7 million for economic development incentives, including \$11.9 million for Enterprise Florida to market Florida as a pro-business location for new investments and assist in retaining and expanding existing businesses.

- **Statewide Facility Needs** – \$142.3 million to construct new state facilities and maintain existing state owned facilities, including new Department of Revenue buildings, a First District Court of Appeal building, and maintenance and repair projects at state facilities throughout Florida.

Removing Burdensome Regulation

Governor Crist also called on Thomas Pelham, Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, and Chuck Drago, Secretary of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, to expedite approval of projects so that construction can begin as soon as possible and to streamline procedures to reduce the negative impact of regulation. The Governor directed agencies to review statutes, rules, procedures, and forms to ensure that:

- Regulation is exercised only to the extent necessary to ensure the public is protected.
- Professions, occupations, and businesses are regulated in a manner that does not restrict entry into the practice of the profession, occupation, or business, or limit the availability of services to the public.
- Regulation does not have an unreasonable affect on job creation or job retention, or place unreasonable restrictions on individuals finding employment.
- Regulation is cost-effective and has favorable economic impact, including the indirect costs to consumers.

Accelerate Florida Think Tanks

To enhance Florida's business friendly environment, Governor Crist charged Dale A. Brill, Ph.D., director of the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development within the Governor's office, to create think tanks that will explore how government can allow entrepreneurialism and innovation to flourish in Florida. Starting in September, business leaders and economic experts will begin developing recommendations in the following areas:

- **Workforce**
- **Higher Education**
- **Transportation**
- **International Trade and Foreign Direct Investment**
- **Growth Management and Housing**
- **Small Business, Minority Business and Manufacturing**
- **Rural Economic Development**

“The Governor is breaking down the silos of government as he continues to challenge agencies throughout government to embrace economic development,” said Brill. “I look forward to identifying innovative solutions that will come from this collaborative approach.”