

Executive Office of the Governor
Long Range Program Plan
FY 2009-2010

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS STATEMENT

The Florida Constitution vests executive power in the Governor, thereby making him responsible for the faithful execution of Florida's laws, the effective performance of the executive branch agencies, the day-to-day management and oversight of the state budget, and the State's armed forces. The Office of Policy and Budget assists the Governor in fulfilling his constitutional and statutory duties.

The Crist/Kottkamp Administration has identified several key priorities for the State of Florida:

Keeping Florida Affordable: Governor Crist is committed to providing broad-based, meaningful, and comprehensive property tax and property insurance reform so that Florida remains an affordable place for families and businesses to prosper. Governor Crist has worked with the Legislature to reduce property insurance rates for Florida's homeowners. Property insurance reforms also require insurers to promptly pay claims and prevent them from canceling policies during hurricane season. Property insurance reforms have attracted over 25 new homeowners insurers since January 2006.

In addition, Governor Crist launched www.ShopAndCompareRates.com, a Web site that helps consumers comparing homeowners insurance rates throughout Florida. On average, 10,000 people visit the interactive Web site every month to receive the information they need to obtain the best coverage for their homes. Governor Crist also remains committed to seeking a national catastrophe fund in order to spread the risk of disasters across the country, thus strengthening Florida's insurance markets.

In addition to lowering insurance costs, Governor Crist remains focused on lowering property taxes. In 2007, he signed landmark legislation rolling back property taxes levied by counties, cities, and independent special districts to below 2006 levels. In January 2008, Florida voters approved an estimated \$9.3-billion savings on property taxes during the first five years. Governor Crist continues to work with the Florida Legislature to find other ways to cut property taxes even further and will seek solutions that require local governments to operate as efficiently as possible, protect Floridians' investments in their homestead, rental and commercial properties, and provide property tax relief in a responsible and equitable manner.

Keeping Florida's Economy Vibrant: Governor Crist seeks to create high-wage jobs, support the growth of small businesses, strengthen Florida's business environment, and promote international trade.

Governor Crist will work to lower taxes, provide affordable housing, and develop a skilled workforce in order to create a business friendly environment and to attract

diverse, high-wage jobs to Florida. During the 2007-08 fiscal year, the efforts of Enterprise Florida and Florida's economic development partners kept more than 9,000 jobs from leaving Florida, and brought almost 12,000 projected new jobs to the Sunshine State. In addition, Governor Crist is committed to allowing businesses to operate without unnecessary government regulation and to fostering an environment where an entrepreneurial and competitive spirit can prosper.

Additionally, Governor Crist is committed to ensuring that Florida continues as a leader in international trade and tourism. To further Florida international trade opportunities, the Governor has led trade and economic development missions to Israel, Brazil and the United Kingdom and Europe. The largest single-state delegation in United States history to Brazil yielded more than \$340 million in actual and anticipated sales generated by our presence there. The Farnborough International Air Show in England resulted in actual and expected sales of more than \$101 million. The investment from 21 firms is expected to create 2,245 high tech jobs in Florida's aviation/aerospace and defense industries.

Protecting Florida's Natural Resources: Governor Crist understands that Florida's natural environment is linked to our quality of life and to the strength of our economy.

In 2008, Governor Crist signed Florida's most comprehensive energy and economic development policy in the history of our state. This groundbreaking legislation moves Florida forward on its path to diversify our energy sources, increase energy efficiency, reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and support the development of renewable energy technologies right here in Florida.

In 2007, the Governor established the framework for Florida's energy future through three executive orders to reduce Florida's greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and remove market barriers for renewable energy technologies. Since the executive orders were signed, Florida has stepped onto the world stage as a major marketplace for advanced energy technologies.

Governor Crist is also keeping Florida's commitment to the restoration of America's Everglades, appropriating \$150 million since 2007 to continue the state-federal partnership to return a natural flow of water across the 2.4 million-acre marsh. He also signed legislation to continue the *Florida Forever* program through at least 2018. The program has been instrumental in conserving water and securing the future of the Everglades.

Governor Crist has also recognized the importance of the heart of America's Everglades, by appropriating in 2007 another \$54 million to Lake Okeechobee and estuary recovery, an additional \$40 million to restore the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers and estuaries, and \$6 million to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for pollution control.

In June 2008, Governor Crist called on the South Florida Water Management District to begin negotiating an agreement to acquire as much as 187,000 acres of agricultural land owned by the United States Sugar Corporation. The vast tracts of land would then be used to reestablish a part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the fabled River of Grass through a managed system of storage and treatment and, at the same time, safeguard the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries.

To protect Florida's oceans and estuaries, Florida will decrease the amount of treated wastewater going into the Atlantic Ocean every day from Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties, benefiting onshore freshwater systems.

Ensuring Success for Every Student: Governor Crist will continue to require accountability, transparency, and high standards so that every student receives a year's worth of knowledge in a year's worth of time.

According to *Education Week's* Quality Counts report, Florida's school performance has risen from 31st to 14th among all states, and to 7th in student achievement. Florida has achieved significant gains in reading and math in recent years. According to the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, Florida was one of only four states in the nation to improve significantly in both fourth and eighth grade reading.

Florida is also closing the achievement gap between minority students and white students – and eliminated it among the number of Florida Hispanic students passing Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 2007. Students in the Sunshine State excel in AP participation and performance, with more than one-fifth of 2007 graduates passing an AP exam.

The Crist/Kottkamp Administration will carefully consider appropriate changes to the administration of standardized testing as long as those changes maximize student achievement. For students who are not performing at grade level or who are not making adequate year-to-year progress, the Governor will seek to provide virtual tutors to assist parents and students in understanding test results and to provide struggling students with individualized instruction, diagnostic testing, and prescriptive assignments. This technology will help students, parents, and teachers understand how to achieve learning gains and adjust instruction where intervention is most needed. By providing state-of-the art virtual resources, no child will be limited by his or her geography or family's financial resources.

The Governor will also work toward the goal of not having a single failing school. When a school is not performing well, he will undertake an honest assessment of the learning environment, including the need for capital improvements, the effectiveness of faculty and staff, compensation and incentives for faculty and staff, technology infrastructure, mentoring, and parental and community involvement. Because the reasons for failure at a particular school are often systemic, he will be committed to a multi-year design that will include measurable goals and objectives for each failing school.

The Governor will also work closely with the State Board of Education's Drop Out Prevention Director to implement the Board's 2006 Strategic Plan to improve Florida's high school graduation rate from 71.9 percent in 2004-2005, to 95 percent by 2015. Under his administration, all high school students in Florida should graduate from high school fully prepared to enter the workplace, to pursue further career education, or to enter a post-secondary degree program.

The best way to increase graduation rates is to link learning to a student's personal experiences and future career aspirations. The Crist/Kottkamp Administration will ensure that career education becomes a core educational expectation for those students not seeking a college degree and that middle and high school students focus on career preparation through rigorous and relevant academics and industry certification. Governor Crist believes that the student who takes a personal interest in a career while in school will have a greater commitment to graduating from high school.

Finally, the Governor will focus on reinvigorating and revitalizing the teaching profession. In 2007, the Legislature passed the Merit Award Program for public school teachers, providing five-percent to 10-percent performance bonuses to the state's best educators. Governor Crist will seek to increase compensation for our teachers so that Florida is able to recruit and retain the best teachers for our students.

Promoting Healthy Floridians: Governor Crist will continue his commitment to increasing access to high quality, affordable health care.

Governor Crist is using market-based strategies to provide discounts on prescription drugs and increase access to affordable health insurance for Florida's 3.8 million uninsured – using virtually no state funds. In the eight months since launching the Florida Discount Drug Card in December 2007 – more than 52,000 Floridians saved more than \$1.1 million on their medication costs.

A model for the nation, the Governor's *Cover Florida* plan allows the State of Florida to negotiate with health insurers to develop affordable health coverage by January 2009 for uninsured Floridians ages 19 to 64. All benefit plans will cost about \$150 per month or less and include, at the very least, coverage for preventive services, screenings, office visits, outpatient and inpatient surgery, urgent care, prescription drugs, durable medical equipment, and diabetic supplies. Approved insurance companies also have to offer consumers a plan that includes catastrophic and hospital coverage. Insurers would also competitively bid to provide supplemental coverage, such as vision, dental and cancer care.

Governor Crist has reformed how new hospitals are approved, providing more access to health care for Floridians, and has increased insurance coverage to families dealing with autism. To address the acute shortage of dentists in our public health system, Governor Crist encouraged legislation to allow out-of-state recruitment of dentists to Florida's public health system. Governor Crist also signed legislation that also allows

parents to keep unmarried children who do not have any dependents enrolled on the family health policy up until age 30, up from the current option of age 25.

To reduce the number of uninsured children throughout Florida, Governor Crist sought funding to provide access to quality, affordable health care for more than 38,000 additional children through the Florida KidCare Program. He also encouraged removing the 10 percent “full pay cap” in KidCare – allowing more than 548,000 uninsured children to access coverage.

The Governor has refocused the Department of Health to be headed by the State Surgeon General who will act as the leading advocate for wellness and disease prevention. To promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for children and all Floridians, Governor Crist established the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness which is charged with developing a state plan of action to increase Floridians’ level of physical fitness through regular exercise and sound nutritional practices. Detailed information on the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness is updated frequently at www.HealthyFloridians.com.

In February 2008, Governor Crist announced the Governor’s Fitness Challenge, a program for Florida’s students, aimed at helping them improve their lives through physical fitness. Piloted in more than 300 elementary schools in the spring and expanded to middle schools in the fall, participating students invest two or three days each week totaling 90 minutes in order to improve in five skill activities related to strength, endurance, flexibility, speed and agility.

To further encourage physical fitness for young Floridians, the Governor signed legislation that will ensure that public-school elementary students receive at least 150 minutes of physical education each week, or an average of 30 minutes each day. Legislation passed in 2008 requires middle schools to offer students in grades 6 through 8 one class period per day of physical education for one semester. Governor Crist will seek similar requirements for high school students. The goal is to help young students have good experiences with physical activity so they will be prepared to choose a lifelong active lifestyle.

Finally, Governor Crist will continue to work with stakeholders to utilize market-based solutions that will lower health care costs and make health care more accessible for all Floridians.