



Doubling Down on Education Investment



GOVERNOR RICK SCOTT
REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
ANNOUNCING \$2,500 TEACHER PAY RAISE
JANUARY 23, 2013

I would like to thank Dr. Jenkins for doing such a great job as Superintendent of Orange County Schools; And, for being focused on nurturing the success of our students.

I would also like to thank Ocoee Middle Principal Sharyn Gabriel and congratulate her for having such a wonderful students and teachers; and for being the 2011 Florida Innovative Principal of the Year. In her school, you'll find iPod Touches, iPads, iMacs, Mac Books, and more, all used to better educate students.

Dr. Jenkins and Principal Gabriel make a difference for their students. I was here just a few months ago, in September, as part of our Education Listening Tour. We meet with teachers and parents and heard their ideas about how we can help our students compete globally.

I came here to listen. And I heard parents' and teachers' concerns. They want 100 percent of our focus to be on student achievement.

Today, I am back here again because we are ready to take action.

But, before I announce the action we are prepared to take together today, I want to talk about our state's economic situation over the last few years.

When I took office in 2011, our state's economy was off-track. What do I mean by that?

In the four years before I took office, we lost 825,500 jobs.

Unemployment more than tripled – from 3.5% to 11.1%.

State debt increased over those four years to \$5.2 billion.

Our real estate market had collapsed.

I ran for Governor because I wanted to preserve the American Dream that I saw fading away. With high unemployment, our state was losing jobs and losing hope.

I ran for Governor committed to get our economy back on track to create more jobs and opportunities for Florida families.

I knew we could not invest more in our students if we did not improve the job prospects for our families.

Today, I am happy to report that since I took office almost two years ago, our unemployment rate has had the second biggest drop in the US – from 11.1 percent to 8 percent.

Just last week, we learned that our unemployment rate is at 8.0% - the lowest it has been in 4 years.

News from the Florida Realtors also indicates that our housing market is making a comeback.

Since I took office two years ago, we have also cut state debt by \$2 billion – lessening the debt burden passed on to our children and grandchildren.

We have also cut taxes and regulations to encourage our economy to make it easier for Florida businesses to hire more Florida workers. This means more opportunities for Florida families to pursue their version of the American dream.

We had to make some hard choices to get our economy back on track. We had hundreds of millions of dollars of federal “stimulus” funds that went away.

We had to make the hard decisions to balance our budget, even with declining funds.

Just like in any family or business, making the decisions to do more with less in lean times is difficult. It is especially difficult to reduce spending in important areas like education. That is why last year, as soon as we were able to, we invested a billion dollars into our K-12 education system.

Today, we are here to make another MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT that will double-down on that billion-dollar investment.

Now that our economy is back on track and we can afford to make major investments again, we are responsible for investing in the areas that will most help Florida families pursue their dreams.

Now that our economy is on track, we must be focused on creating the business climate where Florida businesses will hire more Floridians, where we can invest in student achievement, and where our families can afford to live.

As Governor, I think about how we can help Florida families that are making \$50,000 a year or less; that are struggling to make ends meet. That was my family growing up – and those are many of our Florida families today.

Ultimately, I want all Florida families to have more opportunities to pursue their dreams. That means more job opportunities. It is impossible to connect more Floridians with great jobs without a strong education system that supports student achievement.

Today, we are at an exciting place in the history of education in Florida – thanks in large part to the hard work of our teachers. Florida teachers are the heart of the success of Florida students.

Our students and teachers were recently ranked 6th for educational quality. On a recent international reading survey, our fourth-graders scored among the best in the world. And, the National Council on Teacher Quality ranked Florida teachers number one in the country in their 2012 survey.

Our teachers are working hard to move toward a new set of Common Core State Standards that will help to prepare our students for college and careers. A few months ago, I rolled out my College and Career FIRST plan, which included a number of our proposals to help teachers purchase supplies, instead of using their own money, and to help districts with innovative professional development to help teachers prepare for the new standards.

Not only should we support our teachers during this transition, but we should also recognize them for the hard work they are putting into preparing our students for college and careers. By 2014, Florida teachers will be a part of our performance pay structure that will help attract and advance the most high-performing teachers in our education system. We believe in teacher accountability and we know our teachers do too. With the new performance system in place, now is the time to increase our investment in Florida's teachers.

Today, I am excited to be here to announce that as we continue to move forward and create more jobs, we are doubling down on our investment in education.

Today, I am announcing that I am asking the legislature to join with me in supporting my 2013 budget request to give every Florida full-time public classroom teacher a \$2,500 pay raise.

I can think of no better investment for our state than investing in those teachers who work on the frontline of Florida's future every day by teaching our children.

The full budget, which we will announce in the next few weeks, will include a total of \$480 million for teacher salaries. This funding is enough for a \$2,500 pay raise - plus related benefits – for all fulltime, classroom public teachers.

It is also important to note that not only will my budget include this \$2,500 teacher pay raise, I will propose an overall increase in education funding. We will announce the full budget with even more details on our education investment in the next few weeks.

This is a great day for education in Florida. We have made the hard choices over the last few years to get our economy growing again. We are back on track. Now, we need to double down on our investment in education.

As we continue to invest in improving our education system and supporting the creation of more jobs for Florida families, we are moving full steam ahead toward Florida being the best place in the world to make dreams come true.

Increasing student achievement is critical to keeping our economy growing and creating more jobs and opportunities in Florida.

I am asking every educator at every level in our state – and every elected official at every level to stand with me over the next few weeks and months to support this major investment in Florida teachers; they are critical to increasing student achievement.

This \$2,500 teacher pay raise will be in my recommended budget, but it still needs to pass the legislature before we can sign it into law. It will also need to be collectively bargained at the district level to be implemented. I look forward to working with educators and leaders at all levels of government and all across our state to make this commitment to Florida teachers a reality.

Thank You.