



The Florida House of Representatives

Office of the Speaker

Marco Rubio
Speaker

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Dear Members:

As we approach this year's legislative session, I want to share with you the House's legislative priorities and let you know the issues on which I anticipate the House devoting much of its time this year.

1. *Restarting Our Economy by Limiting Taxes, Government Spending, Burdensome and Needless Regulations*

If we are going to return Florida to the path to prosperity, we must ensure that our state is once again affordable for Floridians and an attractive place to do business.

Implementing long-term, **meaningful revenue caps** on state and local governments will prevent Florida taxpayers from experiencing the sticker shock we are currently experiencing. If reasonable limits are not placed on government growth, our citizens will inevitably find themselves in this position again.

Revenue limits are effective because they force government leaders to prioritize spending and make choices, the way normal families live every day. The spending decisions made during earlier flush times have placed our budget in distress today. When we limit revenue growth, maximize our reserve savings, and then return excess tax revenues to the taxpayers in times of plenty, we'll help keep the growth of government at a reasonable level and protect our economic future.

As with any reform effort, accountability is essential to improvement. The government spending accountability measures being considered in the House are an exciting step forward. **Bringing more transparency to government spending** and putting it online for every Floridian to see will not only help hold Florida government leaders more accountable but will also help build confidence in governments at all levels.

Over the past twelve months, we have spent a great deal of energy debating property tax relief and reform. Each of you should be proud of the debate in which you have participated and the

thoughtful way in which you have conducted yourselves. But as your constituents have told you, more needs to be done.

Amendment One passed last month on the promise that we would do more. We must keep our word. Over a 10 week period this winter, grassroots activists in this state collected over 150,000 signatures for an initiative that would limit all property taxes to no more than 1.35% of the taxable value of a parcel. This idea deserves serious consideration from us.

Chairman Attkisson and the Government Efficiency and Accountability Council are examining meaningful legislation to help deal with some of the inherent unfairness in our property tax system- items such as the **presumption of correctness** and **homestead loopholes**. The House should give this legislation its full attention.

There is a growing awareness that Florida's growth management and permitting processes have grown duplicative, burdensome, and are driving jobs and economic growth away from our state. Chairman Cannon will be working on ways to **cut red tape and streamline the growth management and permitting processes** so we can put Floridians back to work.

The goal is not to protect one less animal or plant or deny citizens their input, but rather to cut down on the time, cost and duplication of effort that government has overwhelmed the growth management process with here in Florida. Talk to any businessperson trying to start a new company and create jobs here in Florida, and you'll understand that this reform is overdue.

2. Bringing Relief and Reforms to our Unaffordable and Unsustainable Insurance System

Although we worked diligently last year on the insurance issue and passed a bi-cameral and bi-partisan package of insurance legislation, Floridians still need relief from insurance rates that continue to smother parts of our state. We will continue to look for ways to **make homeowners insurance affordable** for Floridians.

We were fortunate last year to not be hit by a hurricane, but no one can accurately predict how long our luck will last. In addition to relief from high premiums, Floridians also deserve relief from the threat of the largest tax hike in Florida history if our state is hit by a catastrophic storm.

Last week, under Chairman Reagan's leadership, the Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council unanimously passed **CFO Sink's CAT Fund Risk Reduction Plan**. By bringing this package to the floor early in session and passing it, we can give the reinsurance market the opportunity to write this coverage with private dollars, thereby taking the threat of financial catastrophe off of Floridians.

The House should also continue to invest in what we know works in insurance reform. One of the most successful innovations in last year's insurance legislation was the **Capital Incentive Build-up Program**, which encouraged the growth of private insurance companies instead of the continued growth of Citizens. We should continue this program to help bring more private companies into the market and help resuscitate our private market.

Over 148,000 Florida homeowners have taken advantage of the opportunity under the MySafeFloridaHome program to have their homes inspected and begin mitigation efforts. Let's expand this initiative and look for ways to partner with the private sector while also making it easier to **begin home mitigation through a Zero-Interest Loan Program**. We know our best insurance against damaging hurricanes is a stronger housing stock. Let's do our part to make it happen.

3. Improving Access to Affordable Health Care Solutions

Perhaps no internal problem is more vexing for our country than how to make sure that our citizens have the health care coverage they need and how best to pay for that coverage.

Chairman Bean and the Healthcare Council are working on innovative proposals for a **mandate-free health care marketplace**, or "farmer's market" as Chairman Bean likes to call it. By creating more opportunities for lower cost coverage in the health care insurance arena, we can start to realize the price reductions and consumer choices that drive a private marketplace. More importantly, we can start to see coverage expanded among Floridians who will be able to afford health care coverage for themselves and their families for the first time.

Health care lags behind almost every other industry in the adoption of information technology. Representative Grimsley has important legislation to encourage the development and use of **electronic medical records** among health care providers in order to facilitate the coordination of care and promote higher levels of patient safety and quality of care. The House should give this legislation its full attention.

Our current Medicaid system is unsustainable. It is currently 22% of the state budget, and is projected to 27% in just the next 3 years. Florida simply cannot afford to continue doing business like we are currently. In order to save the Medicaid system, continuing reform is vital. **Expanding Medicaid Reform into Miami-Dade County** is an important step in creating a system that can survive and is a step that we should enact this session.

4. Building a Vibrant and Diverse Economy for the 21st Century

The economic slowdown we are facing today should strengthen our resolve to help build a stronger economy for Florida's future. While state government doesn't create jobs and economic strength, we can play a vital role in creating an environment for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish.

Building a strong economy starts with making sure that our children are prepared to compete for the high paying careers of the future. We have to make sure that our students finish school- both high school and college- with the knowledge and skills they need for tomorrow's economy.

Chairman Pickens and the Schools and Learning Council are working to create a **world-class curriculum** to improve the rigor and relevance of our schools. Our children are no longer just competing with children in Birmingham and Seattle for the jobs of the future; their competition

sits in the classrooms of Bangalore and Shanghai. If we are truly dedicated to making sure Florida once again is an economic leader, we'll make sure our schools are preparing our students to lead us there.

The House has long been a leader in working to improve the quality of our colleges and universities. Recognizing the key role our universities play in global competitiveness and within the constraints of this year's very challenging budget, we should support our universities and the vision the university presidents offer.

In addition to a world-class education system, we are going to have to have a tax and regulatory system that makes Florida an attractive place to locate and grow a business. One only has to look to California to see what happens when a state government taxes and regulates too much—residents and jobs flee the state for more hospitable environments.

Representative Weatherford is working on a **New Markets Tax Credit** to help bring new jobs and industries to Florida's rural and distressed areas. If successful, we can help bring prosperity to parts of our state that have been left behind economically.

Florida is being targeted by other states for the jobs already here, particularly those in the space industry. The scheduled ending of the shuttle program, New Mexico's desire to build its own commercial spaceport, and NASA's awarding the contract to carry supplies to the International Space Station to a Virginia-based company last week demonstrates that we are no longer assured of dominance in this industry because of our past position.

Chairman Cannon and other members are working on assembling a legislative package to help secure Florida's future as a leader in this sector. **Making Florida more attractive for investment and growth of the aerospace industry** is crucial for not just protecting the jobs we already have, but for growing our economy in the years ahead.

The Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council will lead many of our efforts to attract more businesses to Florida and help turn our economy around. **Expanding the number of enterprise zones, tax credits for research and development and matching grants for the research commercialization** are all top priorities. One of the best things we can do to build a strong economy is keep and strengthen the businesses we already have in Florida. Referred to as **Economic Gardening** in economic development circles, these efforts to help small businesses grow and succeed will pay long-term dividends if enacted.

Managing Florida's environmental challenges will also be a major focus this year. Whether you think that climate change is a problem or believe that we have to end our dependence on foreign energy sources to maintain national security, we can all agree there is work to be done. America has a real energy problem, but we must keep the economic hardships of hard-working families in mind as we search for solutions.

Chairman Mayfield has spent months working on a **responsible approach to climate change**. His approach focuses on the private sector and innovation to help us improve Florida's air quality and conserve the natural environment that makes Florida so attractive. Chairman

Mayfield and the Environment and Natural Resources Council also will be looking to **increase the availability of alternative and renewable fuels to consumers**. As Florida moves forward as a leader on these issues, we can set an example for the nation on how to responsibly deal with conservation and environmental issues.

These are exciting times to be a Florida leader. Great challenges bring great opportunities, and this may be the most challenging legislative session we will face. Over the next two months, each of you will have the opportunity to help set Florida's future. Be optimistic for Florida's future, but also realistic about the challenges we face. Because our state, though dimmed today, still shines bright.

I am honored to serve with each of you this Session and look forward to seeing you in Tallahassee next Tuesday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Marco Rubio', written in a cursive style.

Marco Rubio
Speaker