

**PREPARED REMARKS
FLORIDA HOUSE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS
STATE OF THE STATE RESPONSE
SCHEDULED TO AIR MARCH 2, 2010
DEMOCRATIC LEADER PRO TEMPORE GERALDINE THOMPSON**

Hello Floridians!

I am State Representative Geraldine F. Thompson, and I represent Florida House District 39 in Orlando.

I am proud to have the opportunity to share with you the House Democratic Caucus perspective on the state of our great state.

It has been a tough year, and the problems of the economy are as severe as many of us have seen in our lifetimes. My colleagues and I are gathering in Tallahassee for the annual legislative session. We will be presented with major challenges. But the most important task before us is to find ways to shore up the economy.

Democrats in the state House of Representatives firmly believe that job creation for Floridians is job number one. That is why we have come to the State Capitol to build----to build Florida's economy and to rebuild the people's trust in their state government.

Though we are facing state budget shortfalls of billions of dollars, this can be a year of opportunity. We can and we should take big steps to restore Florida as a national model of ingenuity and strength. And we can and we should create high-wage jobs and economic growth.

Florida House Democratic Caucus members will present solutions, and we will work with our colleagues in the other party. Already, there are many good bipartisan ideas under review.

One strategy is to develop new markets for sustainable and renewable energy. Another is to support wise investments in important public works projects in communities throughout the state.

And I hope that we all can agree that this is a year to show a real commitment to improving education by providing adequate resources for schools.

You should know that we are listening closely to our friends in the business community. They are facing skyrocketing increases in unemployment compensation taxes—and Florida House Democrats support immediate action to bring relief.

But business leaders are also telling us that they need a quality workforce. Well folks, that means making a commitment to adequately funding schools, a big factor in why Florida House Democrats will fight those who want to destroy the progress that's been made toward easing school crowding.

We also will stand for affordable and quality health care availability for all Floridians.

Just as importantly, we will work to earn the people's trust. We know that the people's trust is too often violated by abuse and corruption by elected officials and other public servants.

Florida House Democrats seek a number of changes to the legislative process as well as the ethics laws of the state in order to restore faith in the government.

Chronic outside influence by special interests and inside decay have bred cynicism and scorn about many public institutions. The situation can be rectified with comprehensive ethics reforms.

Improvements are needed to ensure that laws and the spending plan are written in a manner that is consistent with Florida's government-in-the-sunshine traditions. We also will support legislation that encourages greater public participation in government and elections.

The reason for these actions are simple.

Florida's challenges need more than one-party solutions.

Consider this: Only a few months ago, we were in special session here in Tallahassee on a very urgent task in which the Legislature put job creation at the top of the agenda. Republicans and Democrats worked together on an important initiative dealing with rail transit.

Passage of the rail legislation means Florida will be getting two-and-a-half-billion-dollars of federal money for a high speed rail project linking Tampa and Orlando. President Obama projects that this project will create more than 1,000 permanent jobs and at least 23,000 construction jobs in Florida.

This is good for the economy. It's good for our transportation future. It's good for the environment. And we did it without significant partisan sniping.

Of course, there are big differences between Democrats and Republicans. Since this is an election year, it's important that you understand these differences.

We think Republicans made the wrong choices for our state last year. They raised taxes and fees on small businesses and the middle class. They made irresponsible budget cuts. And they raided trust funds dedicated to important public causes, such as children's health and conservation land purchases.

By the way, have you noticed how much you are paying for drivers licenses and motor vehicle registrations? Those are increases that Florida House Democrats opposed.

But we will not let partisan bickering and finger-pointing get in the way of important priorities, like job creation, good schools, and quality health care.

Floridians expect us to be focused on helping the state rebuild.

Folks, we've done it before. Floridians have rebuilt after disaster, natural and man-made.

But each time we have been challenged, we have demonstrated our resolve and a determination to endure.

And so, once again Florida, let's rebuild.

Thank you!

###

For additional information, please contact:

Mark Hollis
Communications Director
Democratic Office
Florida House of Representatives
850-488-9622
www.flhousedems.com