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March 4, 2010

The Honorable Jeff Atwater
Senate President
The Honorable Larry Cretul
House Speaker
State Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee FL 32399

Re: Florida Chamber Supports Florida Forever Program

Dear President Atwater and Speaker Cretul:

The Florida Chamber of Commerce believes that the Florida Forever program makes a critical contribution to the long-term economic well-being of our state and preservation of the quality of life of our citizens. For that reason the Florida Chamber endorses funding sufficient to continue to the Florida Forever program, which this year would mean \$4.8 million to launch \$50 million of bonds.

Florida's economic future is dependent on a "knowledge workforce" and a high quality of life that is closely tied to the beauty of Florida. Employers are seeking to locate and create jobs in communities where their employees want to live. Florida's spectacular places and abundant outdoor recreational opportunities therefore give Florida an advantage, and Florida Forever represents an investment in this economic foundation.

Florida Forever helps to both preserve the natural beauty that enhances our quality of life and attract millions of visitors here every year. The lands acquired in this program aid in the protection of water resources upon which all residents and businesses depend. Furthermore, it helps sustain our award-winning Florida State Parks, and enhances the hunting, fishing and wildlife watching that supported 120,000 jobs in 2007, which generated approximately \$6.8 billion in retail sales and \$706 million in state and local taxes.

With the state facing a more than \$3 billion deficit, we fully understand the challenges ahead in crafting a balanced budget without increasing the burden on Florida taxpayers. However, these same economic challenges present a valuable opportunity to invest in this program, as money spent on this program now will go much further than in years past or when the economy begins to recover.

The Florida Chamber respectfully requests your support for funding the Florida Forever program.

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wilson".

Mark Wilson
President & CEO