

**PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**  
**SELECT COMMITTEE ON FLORIDA'S ECONOMY**  
**INITIAL MEETING – DECEMBER 10, 2008**

Thank you, Senator Gaetz, for assuming the leadership role in this very important task, and thanks to each of the Senators who have so generously committed their time and energy to serving on this select committee.

I am charging you this day with addressing the most important issue facing Florida – creating and ensuring an environment for economic success for all Floridians.

When I announced the formation of this committee, I made it clear that this was not simply political posturing. The citizens of this state are genuinely suffering, and many are questioning their ability to continue to live their lives in the same form and fashion as before. When our fellow Floridians are facing decisions of this magnitude, we must act. We must engage the best minds we have at our disposal and dig deeply into the

foundations of Florida's economic structure, seriously challenging the notions upon which it has been built.

Senators, you just participated in a workshop to understand the depths of the fiscal challenges we face as a state. Much has to be done about how we address the worst state budget challenge in three quarters of a century, a challenge caused by a national and international recession.

But more important than "rightsizing" the government's budget is the mission of improving the economic odds for Florida families and Florida businesses. The biggest challenge is not that government has less money. The biggest challenge is that a small business has to lay off a breadwinner; that jobs which could have come to a community are delayed; that an entrepreneur is discouraged from taking a risk and an opportunity for prosperity is lost.

The budget will be easier to balance – and the pressing needs of children, the infirmed, the elderly will more comprehensively be met – if Florida recovers from this recession sooner rather than later, and stronger rather than weaker.

The mission of this Select Committee on Florida’s Economy is to create incentives and eliminate disincentives to economic recovery and growth...and to ensure that government functions more simply, more transparently, less expensively, and more effectively.

This is not like some select committees – with a brief life, a single assignment, and a report that may or may not be acted upon. The Select Committee on Florida’s Economy has a two year calendar that starts today, an aggressive scope of responsibility, authorized to develop and propose statutory

change and constitutional change, and is “hard-wired” to the Senate floor.

The importance I attach to the Select Committee is reflected in the expertise and experience of its membership. The chairs of the five policy and steering committees of the Senate, including our two former Senate Presidents, are all senators with unique qualifications, and valuable perspectives on the economy.

I’m asking you to invite the people of Florida – citizens, representatives of diverse sectors of our economy, entrepreneurs, small business leaders, larger employers – to join you in finding the best ways we can positively affect Florida’s economy.

Economic policy requires reliable research and fact-based decisions. Some of our state’s most respected business economists have agreed to join your mission.

While you develop legislation and, if necessary, constitutional proposals, I also ask you to formulate a proposal to the federal government outlining the elements of a federal stimulus package that would best serve Florida.

We all recognize that the forces which drive our state's economy are linked to the national and international economies. Florida, by itself, cannot achieve economic recovery.

Government does not create prosperity. But it is our duty to seize every opportunity to act, to act now and to make a difference for Florida's families and Florida's businesses.

We have all been challenged by our times, and our obligations to our fellow citizens of Florida have never been greater. So my final thanks to you and to all the members of the Senate; I am confident that future generations will applaud our efforts and our outcomes.