



# NEWS

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## **\$3.2 Billion in State Government Cost Savings Identified** ***Florida TaxWatch Task Force Urges Legislature to Act***

**TALLAHASSEE** — A prominent group comprised of current and former government officials, business leaders, organizational experts, and renowned academics have come up with 87 ideas to save state government \$3.25 billion dollars in the coming fiscal year and even more in future years. It's just in time to help the legislature through an upwards of \$3.2 billion revenue shortfall in the new budget year.

The Government Cost Savings Task Force, organized by Florida TaxWatch, today at a news conference released a report of its work, identifying productivity and efficiency improvements and other cost savings measures to change the way Florida government works, much of it in operational and administrative spending. It includes ideas to eliminate unnecessary duplication among government agencies.

“In good economic times, the legislature would come to town and argue over how to spend an additional billion dollars or if it had been a particularly good year for the economy, two or three billion dollars,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, a non-partisan, non-profit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog. “No one was looking at the core \$65 billion dollar budget. Well, we did.”

Ideas from the 125-page report include requiring that all state agencies use already negotiated state contracts offering goods and services at lower than normal prices (\$200 million savings) and reducing the number of goods and services exempted from competitive bidding requirements (\$50 million to \$125 million savings). Other ideas include offering a temporary tax amnesty program (\$100 million savings) and increasing penalties for Medicaid overbilling (\$104 million savings).

“We focus on the ‘what’, not the ‘who’ of politics,” said Calabro. “And the hope is that our report will take political pressure off of the legislature to make the necessary changes in government operations. If these changes don’t happen this year and next, the state risks being in even greater financial trouble,” he said.

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More than a year in the making, the Task Force report is based on ideas from its members and other parties, including discussions with legislators, and legislative and agency staff. It builds on the success of cost saving recommendations TaxWatch made in January of 2009, of which the legislature passed nearly \$800 million. Many pieces of proposed legislation this session were prompted by or encompass some of the Task Force recommendations.

Florida TaxWatch Chairman David Smith, a retired Chairman and CEO of PSS World Medical in Jacksonville who chaired the Task Force, said TaxWatch communicated these ideas to legislative leaders of both parties and their staffs in November, December and January and will continue to work with them to fully implement these ideas.

“This has to be more than a study – it has to be actionable. We want to modernize government and streamline it,” said Smith. “The cost of not doing so is much greater than not implementing these cost savings ideas.”

The Task Force includes state CFO Alex Sink and Attorney General Bill McCollum, both running for governor in November. “Never in the history of the state has the need for efficiency and prudent spending been more pertinent and absolutely necessary, said Mr. McCollum. “These challenges, while daunting, also present opportunities for change that we cannot afford to miss. While I don’t agree with all of the recommendations, I applaud TaxWatch for convening this diverse group of stakeholders and initiating this critical dialogue.”

Former Corrections Department Secretary Jim McDonough, who chaired the Task Force’s public safety workgroup, said the time to act is now. “At prison construction costs of \$100 million for each prison and another \$24 million to operate each prison annually, we must implement these new ways to reduce our state prison population that are mindful of cost and of public safety,” McDonough said.

Calabro said the overall goal is to create an Omnibus Cost Savings and Productivity Enhancement Act, an annually recurring bill to prompt continued efficiency and cost savings. “We need to create a system that holds state government accountable every year for the revenue generated and spent, said Calabro. “Working hard on this is a lot harder than raising taxes. We have to have an unrelenting dedication to challenging the status quo.”

The Task Force members are Task Force Chairman **Mr. David A. Smith**, Florida TaxWatch Chairman President, and CEO (Ret.), PSS World Medical; Task Force Vice Chair **Mr. Marshall Criser, III**, Florida TaxWatch Chairman-Elect, Transportation & Infrastructure Workgroup Chair, President – Florida AT&T; **John Adams, Jr.**, Ph.D., President & CEO, Enterprise Florida; **Ms. Erika Alba**, Regulation & Oversight Workgroup Chair, Principal & Managing Director of Multi State Legislative and Regulatory Group, The Fiorentino Group; **The Honorable JD Alexander**, Florida Senate Chairman of the Senate Policy and Steering Committee on Ways and Means (Designee of the Senate President); **Mr. Hoyt R. “Barney” Barnett**, Vice Chairman Publix Super Markets, Inc.; **Mr. Barney Bishop, III**, President and CEO, Associated Industries of Florida; **Mr. Robert Butterworth**, Of Counsel, Atkinson, Diner, Stone, Mankuta & Ploucha, P.A.; **Mr. Dominic M. Calabro**, President and CEO, Florida TaxWatch; **Mr. Chuck Cliburn**, Senior Vice President & Florida Client Executive, ACS; **The Reverend J. Allison DeFoor, II**, Managing Partner, Castille, DeFoor, & Armstrong; **Ms. Ann Duncan**, General Government Administration & Operation Workgroup Chair, President, Vertical Integration; **Mr. Phil Geiger**, Ed.D, MBA, President, Educational Services Division, MAXIMUS; **Mr. David Griffin**, David Griffin Consulting; **Mr. Michael Jennings**, Vice President Government Relations, Prudential; **Mr. Mark Kaplan**, Vice President, Planning & Government Affairs, Mosaic Fertilizer, LLC; **Mr. David Mann**, Education Workgroup Chair, Chairman & CEO – North Florida, SunTrust Bank; **The Honorable Bill McCollum**, Attorney General, State of Florida; **Mr. James McDonough**, Public Safety Workgroup

Chair, Former Secretary of the Florida Department of Corrections; **Mr. Patrick Neal**, President, Neal Communities of SW FL, Inc.; **Ms. Susan Pareigis**, President, The Florida Council of 100; **Mr. Phillip Raymond**, Chief Financial Officer & Vice President, Gulf Power Company; **Ms. Michelle Robinson**, President – S.E. Region, Verizon; **Ms. April Salter**, President and COO, Salter > Mitchell; **The Honorable Franklin Sands**, Health & Human Services Workgroup Chair, Minority Leader of the Florida House of Representatives; **Ms. Kathleen Shanahan**, CEO, WRScompass; **The Honorable Alex Sink**, Chief Financial Officer, State of Florida; **Mr. Jose Valiente**, C.P.A., President, Florida Institute of CPAs; **The Honorable Will Weatherford**, Florida House of Representatives (Designee of the House Speaker); **Mr. Mark Wilson**, President and CEO, Florida Chamber of Commerce; **Mr. John Zumwalt, III**, Chairman and CEO, PBS&J

The Work of the Government Cost Savings Task Force has been made possible through the generous philanthropic support of the following sponsors: AT&T; The Haskell Company; PSS World Medical, Inc.; Publix Super Markets Charities; State Farm Companies; State Farm Foundation; and Verizon Foundation.

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Media Note: For questions on this report after 8 p.m. tonight, please contact Harvey Bennett, Senior Vice President of Florida TaxWatch, at 850-510-7185.

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Florida TaxWatch is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 30 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Its mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida state and local government. Its support comes from homeowners and retirees, small and large businesses, philanthropic foundations, and professional associations. On the web at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).