



NEWS

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CONTACT: Robert Weissert
Director of Communications
& External Relations
850-222-5052, ext. 20
850-321-5052 (cell)
robert@floridatxwatch.org

STATE EMPLOYEES HONORED FOR INNOVATIVE IDEAS *Florida TaxWatch Honors Those Who Save Taxpayers Money*

TALLAHASSEE — While most Floridians are forced to tighten their belts during these tough economic times, there are extraordinary state employees who are working hard to protect Floridians and save their tax dollars. Diane Austin, Jeanne Owens, Rick Turnage, and Steve Waltz of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles are just such a group. When state law enforcement needed a more effective way to conduct vehicle searches, this four-member team developed an online search tool to provide fast identification of vehicles that matched witness descriptions. Not only does this innovation help protect Floridians, but also the innovative search tool they created in-house saved the taxpayers nearly \$300,000.

Mary Leontakianakos is another example of an exemplary state employee: this past year she negotiated \$61 million in consumer restitution from cruises lines that had charged additional fees after consumers had paid. Her dedication to her job as the Director of the Economic Crimes Division in the Department of Legal Affairs has provided millions in refunds to consumers in Florida and across the nation.

The dedication and ingenuity of these employees, and many others like them, has resulted in significant cost-savings to the State of Florida and has earned them a 2009 Prudential Financial - Davis Productivity Award at the 21st Anniversary Awards Luncheon held this week in Tallahassee. Director Mary Leontakianakos and the four-member team from the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles are just two of the 38 award winners receiving recognition for a job well done, along a handshake from Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, Chair of the Prudential Financial - Davis Productivity Awards and other state officials at the event Friday afternoon.

The Prudential - Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative chaired by Lt. Governor Kottkamp, administered by Florida TaxWatch, and sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100, and the State of Florida. Cash awards of \$250 to \$2,750 plus commemorative plaques and certificates of commendation are presented annually to state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

Following an introduction to the event by **Master of Ceremonies, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Larry Cretul**, along with **Susan Story**, President and CEO of Gulf Power Company and Chair of the Florida Council of 100, each award winner was welcomed on to the stage to be presented

with their award and hardy congratulations from **Lt. Governor Kottkamp, Dominic M. Calabro**, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, and **Mike Jennings**, Vice President of Government Relations with Prudential, the anchor sponsor the Prudential – Davis Productivity Awards program.

“This award recognizes the dedicated efforts of Florida’s state workers whose commitment to serving the people of our state is helping create a more efficient and effective state government,” said **Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp**. “On behalf of Governor Crist and the 19 million people who call Florida home, thank you for your tremendous efforts to ensure a brighter future for the great State of Florida,” he added before individually honoring the winners of the individual and team awards.

“These individuals bring honor to themselves and to state government,” **Speaker Larry Cretul** said of the exemplary state employee winners. “Their accomplishments in generating efficiencies, productivity, and savings set an example for us all. They deserve our recognition and reward for jobs well done.”

Speaking to the award winners, Calabro explained the significance of recognition to the winners. “Your dedication to your job, your profession, and to our state is an inspiration to all of us. Now, more than ever, I believe it is necessary that government be as efficient as we can be – and each one of you is a model of how we can improve government together,” he said. Calabro also explained the value of the program to Florida taxpayers. “This partnership between the non-profit and business communities to recognize, reward, and replicate the innovative cost-avoidance and cost-savings ideas of exemplary state employees has saved more than \$6 billion for Florida’s taxpayers since its inception in 1989.”

Since 1989, more than 15,000 individuals, teams, work units and partnerships have been honored for producing more than \$6 billion worth of added value. The 2009 competition awarded 559 winners statewide for their innovations and productivity improvements worth \$342 million in cost savings, cost avoidances and increased revenue for state government. Other winners from the Tallahassee/Northwest Florida area who were honored at Friday’s luncheon include:

**Will Haselden, Manager, CyberFraud Section, Economic Crimes Division
Department of Legal Affairs, Tallahassee**

(Outstanding Individual Achievement -- commemorative plaque and \$1,750 cash)

Will Haselden forced the cell phone industry to stop advertising ring tones as free. The industry’s deceptive campaign was costing consumers millions annually as kids signed up for the free ring tone, but their parents subsequently were charged a subscription fee of at least \$9.95 per month. In many cases, even the subscription fee was misleading, as it was not well described in the cell phone bill. Mr. Haselden’s first-in-the-nation achievement requires the subscription cost to be clearly displayed. Additionally, he negotiated settlements with several companies that obtained restitution of approximately \$10 million for Florida consumers and \$6.5 million for the Economic Crimes Division, which is entirely self-funded from fees and costs received through settlements. Award Code: DLA-25

**General Counsel’s Office Litigation Reduction Plan
Department of Children and Families and Department of
Financial Services, Tallahassee**

(Distinguished Team Achievement -- commemorative plaque and \$1,500 cash)

This 41-member team of staff from the Department of Children and Families’ Office of the General Counsel and Mental Health Program Office, together with employees of the Division of Risk Management, Department of Financial Services, developed a litigation reduction program to identify and resolve cases at the earliest possible time to better serve clients, and provide more services to those in need. Savings in litigation costs and human resource hours normally dedicated to managing such cases totaled \$41 million. The team has decided to donate their cash award (\$1,500) to the Bob Butterworth Endowment, which assists youth who are aging out of foster care. For more information, contact Juan Collins at (850) 488-2381 or email juan_collins@dcf.state.fl.us. Award Code: DCF-141

In addition to the 38 awards that will be presented during the ceremony Friday, another 225 awards were conferred on more than 14,000 state employees (individually and in teams) from the Tallahassee/Northwest Florida area. The accomplishments for which all 263 Tallahassee/Northwest Florida awards were conferred, as well as those of all awards from around Florida, are detailed in the [*2009 Prudential – Davis Productivity Awards Magazine*](#) and a list of all winners is available at www.FloridaTaxWatch.org/dpa.

Prudential Financial is in its sixth year as **Anchor Sponsor of the Davis Productivity Awards program**. Their support is crucial for sustaining and growing this nationally unique initiative. Governor Charlie Crist and Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, as well as Attorney General Bill McCollum and Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink, have made leveraging the added value of award winning achievements by adapting them to other areas of state government a priority for building a more effective and efficient government. The Florida TaxWatch Adaptable Achievements on-line publication identifies more than 800 achievements from the past five years of winners that can create more than \$100 million worth of this added value within three years after full implementation.

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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.