



# NEWS

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## **Florida TaxWatch Statement on the 2008-09 Budget Signing: *Governor leaves \$109 million worth of turkeys in the budget***

**TALLAHASSEE** — Twelve days after Florida TaxWatch publically identified \$110 million worth of “budget turkeys” in the annual *Turkey Watch Report*, Governor Crist wielded very little of his constitutional “line-item veto” power, striking only two additional projects, worth a total of \$1.1 million, in signing the state’s Fiscal Year 2009 Budget today. One of the two projects vetoed today was identified by the *Turkey Watch Report*, thus leaving 131 projects identified by the report, worth almost \$109 million, in the budget. The Governor’s budget message also listed a previously vetoed item worth \$250 million.

A budget turkey is an appropriation – usually a legislative member project – that circumvents the legitimate budgeting process established by the legislature itself. The 2008 Florida TaxWatch Turkey Watch Report, released May 30, 2008, identified 132 projects worth almost \$110 million. The report and a list of the “budget turkeys” are available at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).

“The people need fiscal constraint from their elected leaders. The people of Florida rightfully expect the Governor to withhold approval of items that violated the integrity of the legislative process for appropriating their hard-earned money. Vetoing these turkeys would have been an important victory for the taxpayers of Florida in two ways: First, by showing that projects that did not go through the appropriate budget process would not be funded in a year when core services that many Floridian’s rely on were being cut; and second, limiting these expenditures would have reduced the chance that more cuts would be necessary during a special session or that the state’s reserve fund would need to be used,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, a non-partisan, non-profit government watchdog and research institute based in Tallahassee.

As signed today by Governor Crist, the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget cuts \$332 million from K-12 education, or \$131 (1.8%) per student; cuts payments to hospitals serving the poor by \$250 million; and cuts nursing home payments by \$164 million. Additionally, the budget increases fees-for-services (such as court filing fees) by more than \$200 while increasing tuition across the university system by 6 percent.

“It’s disappointing that the Governor allowed so many questionable appropriations to remain in the budget while core services provided to the people of Florida are being cut across the board. The constitution vests in the Governor the power and the responsibility of line-item veto for the good of the citizens and taxpayers of Florida. There were more than \$100 million worth of projects that should have been vetoed, and there is only one person in Florida who had the constitutional ability and responsibility to do so,” Calabro added.

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Florida TaxWatch is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 29 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).