



# NEWS

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## **BUDGET CUTS OFFER FLORIDA UNIQUE COST-SAVING AND EFFICIENCY OPPORTUNITIES**

### ***Governor Crist and CFO Announce 3 New Florida TaxWatch Reports***

**TALLAHASSEE** - Governor Charlie Crist and CFO Alex Sink joined Florida TaxWatch President Dominic M. Calabro and Florida TaxWatch Chairman Mike A. Jennings at a press conference to announce the release of two new Florida TaxWatch reports. With the reports, Florida TaxWatch has identified numerous ways state government can both cut costs and increase accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the wake of the call to cut \$1 billion from the state's budget. And several of the suggested measures have already been mandated by voters to take place this year.

"These are historic times for Florida. At no point in our history have we had more tools at our disposal to help assure our citizens that their government is operating responsibly and efficiently," said Crist. "There is no better time than now to examine our budget process and find ways to add value and efficiency for the people of Florida."

"Before we make cuts in services to Florida taxpayers, we need to be able to assure them that their government is operating in an increasingly efficient manner," said Florida TaxWatch President and CEO Dominic M. Calabro. "We need a culture change – a fundamental shift – in government budgeting in Florida. We need to seek out efficiencies and develop methods for recognizing and rewarding those state agencies and employees who have taken appropriate risks and measures to increase efficiency and cut costs."

"Government has a reputation for spending our tax dollars inefficiently," said Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink. "I applaud Florida TaxWatch today for highlighting a number of ideas that may lead to reduced government spending and greater customer service for Floridians."

Florida Taxwatch finds that the budget-cutting exercise offers state government an unprecedented opportunity to increase accountability, effectiveness and efficiency to benefit taxpayers beginning in the current fiscal year. And a new law approved by voters in November 2006 mandates the creation of a Government Efficiency Task Force charged with enhancing government productivity and efficiency and with making the planning and budgeting processes more favorable, also beginning this year.

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Both Florida TaxWatch reports outline several recommendations for doing just that:

- Prohibiting spending of non-recurring revenue for recurring expenditures.
- Improving energy efficiency and streamlining data management processes, and
- Using the Savings Sharing program to offer incentives, recognition and rewards to state employees who work toward money-saving measures that help to improve accountability;
- Ensuring that organizational units aimed at preventing fraud and abuse have the resources needed to get the job done;
- Requiring the Legislature to consider cost savings recommendations by replication of the Florida TaxWatch - Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Award-winning achievements for greater cost savings, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability and, with the Auditor General and the Governor, produce an annual productivity report card for citizens;
- Maximizing federal funding in all areas of state government (previous Florida TaxWatch Research Reports found that the state was shortchanged by billions of dollars on federal grants and in 1998 was ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation in per capita grant receipts).
- Enforcing, and putting teeth and meaningful consequences into, the Florida Government Accountability Act, which dictates systematic performance reviews of all state agencies and possible abolishment of those determined to be obsolete; and
- Continuing to work with the new Council on Efficient Government, designed to ensure efficiency in agency outsourcing.

Florida TaxWatch believes that, before asking taxpayers to accept reductions in the level of services provided, government agencies should ensure that they are operating as efficiently as possible.

“Florida TaxWatch has identified practices that state government agencies can implement to evaluate their operations and determine if each is operating efficiently and effectively, and to ensure that programs and activities continue to operate in the most efficient manner,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch. “By taking steps to improve efficiency, government can better justify future reductions in the level of services in response to any mandated restrictions on its ability to levy property taxes.”

The Research Report “**Florida Government Has Unprecedented Opportunities to Increase Accountability and Achieve Cost Savings**” details the state’s rich history of government improvement going back to the 1960s. This report outlines noteworthy efforts from the last four decades, summarizes why cost-saving proposals often don’t “take,” and provides support to encourage councils, commissions, committees and task forces to cut costs and actually improve performance, accountability and efficiency in state agencies to increase value to the taxpayer.

The Special Report “**Food for Thought**” offers suggestions for constitutional, statutory, and executive councils, commissions, and task forces addressing state efficiency and accountability issues. The report recommends creating a culture of innovation in Florida and implementing several programs aimed at cutting costs while increasing efficiency and improving accountability.

Due to newly enacted laws and constitutional changes, Florida now has more organizational entities dedicated to improving governmental efficiency and effectiveness than at any time in its history. But the state has no formal process in place to ensure that these groups’ recommendations are systematically considered and acted upon. Inertia and the press of time could kill these good ideas before they see the light of day, and at the expense of the public good.

“Often when agencies are asked to cut costs, they suggest cuts to popular services, in order to dissuade legislators from enacting any budget cuts at all,” Calabro said. “Agencies have also avoided cuts by reporting that increased demand for services prohibit them from reducing their overall costs.”

[Click here to view the Research Report “Florida Government Has Unprecedented Opportunities to Increase Accountability and Achieve Cost Savings”](#)

[Click here to view the Special Report “Food for Thought”](#)

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Florida TaxWatch is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 28 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 Government. On the web at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).