

The Inaugural Speech of Governor Rick Scott

Thank you!

Governor Crist, thank you for your graciousness.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Cabinet, Mr. Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court.

Distinguished guests and my fellow Floridians.

We gather today to talk about Florida's future. To assess where we are, to define where we want to go, and to plan how to get there.

Clear goals and hard work can achieve amazing things. The giant oak trees that surround us here ARE what they ARE because acorns had a plan.

Once we take the right steps, I am absolutely convinced that Florida will become the most exciting place in the world to live and work.

Let's begin by facing squarely the challenge of our time - a stalled economy.

This morning more than a million Floridians got out of bed and faced another day of unemployment. For months they've searched for work. They fill out applications. They beg for interviews. They face rejection after rejection.

Many are people who once earned a good living on a construction site. When the economy stalled, building stopped, and they found themselves with skills, but no degree and no job.

Some are young adults who got a degree and were eager to get started on their lives, but they couldn't find a job, and they've had to move back home.

Others are middle-aged adults who had been steadily employed for years - and then lost their jobs almost overnight.

Unemployed parents struggle to put on a brave face for their children, but it's hard to hide the fact that the wolf is at the door.

For ALL the unemployed, life without a paycheck is a desperate daily scramble to provide the basics.

I've been a child in a home like that. My father was often laid off, my mother took in ironing just so we could have food on the table. I have a very clear memory of their fear and uncertainty as they struggled to provide for

five kids.

So, for me, job creation is a MISSION. My personal memories fortify my commitment to this mission.

There are millions of families across Florida whose future depends on the steps we take to create jobs. America was built on the promise that anyone could succeed who was willing to work hard. But, when our economy falters and jobs disappear, that American promise seems hollow.

Left uncorrected, high unemployment creates a spiral down into hopelessness. WE WILL NOT LET THAT HAPPEN IN FLORIDA.

Faced with a deep recession, some say the answer is to expand the role of government. That's the approach the administration chose to take in Washington. It's the WRONG approach.

It requires magical thinking to expect government to create prosperity. Government has no resources of its own. Government can only give TO us what it has previously taken FROM us - minus a huge cut for the government middleman. A lean and limited government has a role to play in providing a safety net. But prosperity comes from the private sector. ONLY from the private sector.

The only path to better days is paved with new private sector jobs. In my own life, my first jobs were low-paying, but they gave me a toe-hold on the future. They taught me self-discipline. They gave me self-respect. They made me a productive citizen rather than a dependent.

The availability of those first jobs is essential for steady improvement in the lives of young Floridians. But those entry-level jobs are not enough. The availability of BETTER jobs is the key to long-term prosperity.

Florida has to develop a broader-based economy with a wider diversity of employment opportunities. Our incredible natural resources, our wonderful climate, our beautiful beaches have given us competitive advantages in agriculture and tourism.

We have a long history as a critical national resource for the support and training of our military and the manufacture of defense related materials. Those sectors will always be the bedrock of our economy. But we have to capture the full spectrum of business activities.

We need to manufacture more things in Florida. We need to capitalize on our geographical location as the natural connector and distribution hub for the growing economies of Central and South America. We need to become the premier location for cutting edge technology.

The people of Florida elected me to get this state back to work, and I believe in this mission. We have hard-working people who desperately want jobs. We have energetic entrepreneurs with plenty of ideas, and persuadable investors with ready cash.

All that's been missing is the determination to create the most favorable business climate in the world.

We have to remember that modern businesses can locate anywhere. If the conditions Florida offers aren't the best, businesses go elsewhere.

What does it take to create that favorable business climate? Florida has to offer the best chance for financial success. Not a guarantee - just the best chance.

Three forces markedly reduce that chance for success: Taxation, regulation and litigation. Together those three form “The Axis of Unemployment.” Left unchecked they choke off productive activity.

Florida has wisely refused to impose an income tax. Under my plan we’ll eliminate the business tax and reduce the property tax.

The state of Florida raises enough revenues to meet its needs. It should focus on spending those revenues smarter, setting better priorities and demanding more accountability. We’ll also re-examine every regulation to make sure its benefits outweigh its costs. Unless they are pruned.

Regulations grow like weeds. While there are SOME regulations that are essential for health and safety, and others that are essential to the protection of our priceless environment, it’s PAST TIME to demand that every regulation be re-evaluated.

We will conduct a top-to-bottom review of all state regulations and weed out unnecessary ones that hinder job creation.

Today, I will sign an Executive Order creating a state office of Fiscal Accountability and Regulatory reform to review all proposed and existing regulations to determine their impact on job creation.

Every Floridian should have the right to access the court system for redress of harm. But, we will not allow excessive lawsuits to strangle job creation. And we WILL NOT ALLOW a small group of predatory lawyers to stalk the business community in search of deep pockets.

In the absence of serious tort reform, Florida will lose opportunities for job growth. No special interest group can be allowed to triumph over the goal of full employment. Job creators need to know that the state government of Florida stands ready to work WITH them, not against them.

It’s important to recruit companies from around the world, it’s even MORE important to support the home-grown successes in our own backyard. Small businesses are incredibly effective weapons against unemployment. But SMALL businesses are also the most vulnerable to poorly drawn regulations and endless delays in permitting.

Interaction between business owners and their government should not be confined to demands for fees and forms and permits. Our main message to potential job creators will be, “How can we help you succeed?”

Private sector jobs grow in places where public sector spending is kept within bounds. All of us who are lucky enough to have a job working for the people of Florida have a duty to watch over state spending with great vigilance. Floridians have entrusted us with their tax dollars. They worked hard to earn those dollars. They badly need their money for other things. We must treat those resources with the respect they deserve and keep our demands to a minimum.

We will require accountability budgeting in state government and force each and every state department to justify its spending and performance every year.

Once we take the right steps, Florida will become the most exciting place in the world to live and work. Let’s commit today to make Florida the premier location for innovation. Let’s encourage the modern tinkers, the out-of-the box thinkers. Let’s become THE place in the world where high-quality research can be translated into high-quality jobs in record time.

Let's make it easy to build and grow a business in Florida, so that new enterprises will compete with each other for space.

Let's tell the world: "If you can dream it, it's EASY to make it HAPPEN in Florida."

Why NOT? After all, we have always been the destination for dreamers. The place where someone with a big new idea could give it a try. Railroads into the wilderness. A magic kingdom. A trip to the moon. Freedom from a foreign tyrant. Better health, life without winter. Large and small, dreams are the stuff that Florida is made of.

While we set about becoming the best place in the country to create jobs, we'll also take a fresh look at education and health care.

Few things matter as much to us as our health care and the education of our children. It's time to offer Floridians more choices, more opportunity to select the services they need.

Why should we cling to models created in another century? Why should we allow bureaucracies to make our decisions for us? Floridians differ in their dreams for their children. Every child is unique, and every child can learn. We need an education system that offers the maximum amount of choice. A system focused entirely on what's best for individual student learning. We can't create a workforce for the future with an education model that's stuck in the past.

To capture the world's best jobs, we'll need to offer the world's best-educated workforce. In the health sector, top-down government programs treat patients like interchangeable parts on an assembly line. But patients want to be treated as individuals. Choosing their own doctors and making their own decisions in consultation with those doctors.

Increasingly, bureaucrats are trampling all over that key relationship, setting arbitrary limits and stifling innovation, without regard to the priorities of patients. The very wealthy will always have plenty of options. But most Floridians have far too little say in how their children are educated or how health care services are provided. NONE of this is written in stone.

All that's missing is the courage to change. Here's how we'll move toward better services.

First, we'll refuse to allow increased government intrusion in these areas. We'll put FLORIDIANS back in the driver's seat with increased use of free markets. Because when government does the buying, government chooses what services are available.

The truth is, he who pays the piper calls the tune. We want EVERY Floridian to be in a position to call the tune.

We'll also apply some of the key tools that private businesses use to create a culture of constant improvement. We'll measure everything.

We'll implement changes based on what we learn from those measurements. And, most importantly, we'll hold everyone accountable.

No job - public or private - should be immune from accountability.

In the coming days, we'll begin to put our plans into action. Entrenched special interests may try to protect the status quo. But I have been given the great honor of serving ALL the people of Florida, and I am determined to do

everything I can to make real and lasting improvements in the lives of my fellow Floridians.

I believe that each of us is responsible to our Maker for what we do with the time allotted to us on this Earth.

Recognizing that my Maker is watching over my service as governor, I will be RESOLUTE in seeking bold, positive change.

In the last few years, Floridians have had a tough time. High unemployment and declines in our housing market have left a trail of destruction as bad as any hurricane. But EVERY generation of Floridians has faced tough challenges. In the 1880s yellow fever hollowed out entire communities. In the depression of the 1930s, more than one in five families required relief funds to survive. In the 1940s, over a quarter of a million Floridians served in uniform, and their worried families were sometimes short of basic necessities.

In every decade we've had to rebuild after horrific hurricanes. After adversity, Floridians always come back stronger. Our current problems are absolutely solvable and our future is in our own hands.

WE ARE RESILIENT PEOPLE. Whether our national government takes the right steps or not, here in Florida, we have what we need to make the next four years the most exciting time in our history.

This is the right time to act.

Shakespeare put it this way: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." I believe this is high tide.

This is the time we can do great things together. If we have the courage to act, our children and our grandchildren will someday thank us for it.

May God Bless the Great State of Florida.

Let's get to work.

Ideas In Action

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