

THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE



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DEMOCRATIC LEADERS CALL ON REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP TO GET COMMUTER RAIL OPPORTUNITES ON TRACK

TALLAHASSEE --- Florida Senate Democratic Leader Al Lawson and Florida House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands today jointly called on the Republican leadership of the Legislature to resolve remaining obstacles hampering Florida's ability to tap \$8 billion in federal economic recovery money for commuter rail.

Federal transportation officials have made the financial windfall available for the development of high-speed rail initiatives nationwide, with Florida being one of several states vying for the money and the jobs it would create.

While federal officials are warning that the failure to act quickly will endanger our state's opportunity to qualify for these critical funds, the clock is ticking and Florida leaders remain at an impasse. Although Senate President Jeff Atwater supports the call for a special session to address Florida's commuter rail, House Speaker Larry Cretul remains uncommitted. In addition, labor concerns and liability issues must be addressed.

"I share Senate President Jeff Atwater's sense of urgency on this matter," said Leader Lawson. "Florida leads the nation in the number of residents unemployed. Washington is offering eight billion ways to put our people back to work. Whatever obstacles still remain in building a legislative consensus, I urge the leadership to resolve them."

Leader Sands said the job-creation prospects, the ability to revitalize construction and trades industries, and other economic outgrowth by using these federal funds in Florida brings new immediacy to the issue.

“Florida Democrats are committed to job creation,” said Leader Sands. “If commuter rail offers the promise of new economic opportunity and transportation innovation, then Florida’s legislative leaders need not further delay. It is time to stop the political stall tactics. The last thing that out-of-work Floridians want to hear today is nay-saying and excuses from Tallahassee. They want to hear how to get this done.”

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