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## **HOUSE REPUBLICANS' BAD BUDGET FOOLS WITH FLORIDA**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** -- At the halfway mark of the 2010 legislative session, ironically on April Fools' Day, Florida House Republicans today approved a budget that hurts working Floridians, cuts education spending, kills jobs, breaks promises to public servants, halves the stipend given to children leaving the foster-care system, and reduces vital services.

Who are they fooling? The budget fools with Florida's middle class and small businesses. It fools with Florida's children and their educators. It fools with the uninsured and underinsured. It fools with the state's economy.

In a legislative session during which few Democratic proposals to modernize our economy and tax structure were allowed to be debated, Florida House Republicans today chose to balance the state's budget on the backs of Florida's middle class families and small businesses during the worst recession in modern history.

A year ago, House Republicans rammed through nearly a billion dollars in new tax hikes, including major fees on Florida families, tourists and industry. This year, the House Republican approach consists of unnecessary and painful cuts that go

deeply into the very heart of Florida's small businesses and its beleaguered middle class.

Florida House Democrats recognize that Floridians want a state spending plan that:

- Promotes economic growth and job creation;
- Doesn't raise taxes and fees on working families and small businesses;
- Invests in public education, vital health care programs and essential state services;
- Attacks waste, fraud and abuse;
- Makes good use of federal economic stimulus funds;
- Is fiscally responsible but avoids cuts that could have negative long-term consequences; and
- Is crafted in the sunshine with real input from all interested Floridians.

**Unfortunately, the budget that passed today along party lines fails** Florida's families and small businesses. This budget:

- Threatens public education and makes risky decisions involving people's health.
- Kills jobs by delaying transportation spending and thousands of potential construction jobs.
- Imposes a middle-class tax hike by dramatically raising tuition.
- Breaks promises by draining trust funds for economic development projects, such as affordable housing programs. Altogether, it sweeps \$788 million in trust funds.
- Disrespects public servants, including firefighters, police officers, school teachers and other public employees by attacking job protections, and retirement and health benefits.

**EDUCATION** The Republican House budget fails to hold education harmless. This budget:

- **Reverses per-student spending** on K-12 public schools to roughly what it was five years ago in 2005. The budget cuts per-student spending by \$52.
- **Raises university tuition—a middle-class tax hike**—by as much as 15 percent and by at least 8 percent at all universities.
- **Cuts university funding** by nearly 2.5 percent.

**HEALTH CARE** Republican House budget writers are making risky decisions with Florida's health programs. The budget:

- Ends health benefits for 5,800 low-income **pregnant women** across Florida, increasing risks of more premature births and low birthweight babies.
- Cuts for a third-consecutive year payments to Florida's **health providers**, such as pharmacists, doctors, clinicians and nursing home operators.
- Slashes in nearly half the maximum monthly \$1,256 stipend to **foster care youth** leaving the state's dependency system.
- Erodes funding for **county health departments**—a last resort health care provider for uninsured and under-insured Floridians.

### **TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT**

- Florida House Republican leaders **raided \$400 million from a road-building fund** that could be used to stimulate the economy and create more jobs. They propose this when the state's unemployment rate is at 12.2 percent, the highest in at least 40 years. The result of this rate is estimated to cost 8,000 jobs a year and a \$3.1 billion economic impact.
- House Republican budget writers are transferring \$174 million dedicated to **affordable housing home ownership** to plug holes in the state budget.
- Provides no funding for **Florida Forever and Everglades Restoration**.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY & GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

- Reduces access to community supervision and intervention services for juvenile offenders.
- Cuts funding to state prosecutors and public defenders.
- Authorizes 3 percent salary and benefit cuts and eliminates hundreds of jobs of public employees statewide.

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