



Florida House of Representatives
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Remarks Regarding Florida's Race to the Top Application

TALLAHASSEE --- Florida House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands (D-Weston) issued the following statement regarding Florida's application in the Race to the Top competition for federal education funds:

"I congratulate President Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and members of Congress for making available \$4.35 billion in federal dollars through the Race to the Top competition. I am hopeful that Florida will capture a significant grant despite serious concerns that have been raised about the application submitted today.

"The future of Florida's economy and the skills of tomorrow's workforce depend greatly on the quality of today's public education system. It is important for Florida to take full advantage of available federal education funds, especially in today's economic climate when there are limited state dollars for schools. But it is evident that Florida could have done better in its Race to the Top application that is now on its way to Washington.

"To my disappointment, Florida Education Commissioner Eric Smith rejected four very reasonable changes to the contract that local school districts were asked to sign. These changes would have gone a long way toward easing significant concerns about the application. Several key concerns were brought to his attention

in a January 8 letter from Mr. Bill Montford, CEO for the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, that was written on behalf of his group as well the statewide associations for school boards and classroom teachers.

“It is important to note that eight of Florida’s 67 school districts (12 percent) have refused to join the agreement to receive the federal stimulus money. I am frustrated that the Florida Department of Education failed to develop a top-notch application that could have been backed by all 67 Florida school districts.”

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