



*Florida House of Representatives*  
Democratic Office

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**HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER STATEMENT  
REGARDING FLORIDA'S RACE TO THE TOP APPLICATION**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. --** In response to the announcement that Florida has not qualified in the first round of federal education grants under the Race to the Top competition, Florida House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands issued the following statement:

“I am saddened that Florida failed to receive any funding in the first round of the federal Race to the Top competition. Our state has missed a unique opportunity to receive significant financial help toward implementing much-needed education reforms. I trust that the application process has been a productive learning experience for our state’s leaders. If so, Florida can enter the next round of competition much wiser.

“Despite predictions that Florida was a shoe-in for this grant, Florida’s application was less than perfect. Sadly, our state’s Race to the Top application represented an extreme view of education reform, not a mainstream approach. Accordingly, it was rejected by several of the state’s school districts and virtually every teachers’ association in the state.

“Regardless, our state remains in great need for funding for education enhancements. Therefore, I strongly encourage Governor Charlie Crist and Florida

Education Commissioner Eric Smith to immediately begin developing a new application for the next phase of Race to the Top funding. This time, I hope that they draft a plan that all school districts, teachers and school administrators can support.

“While we don’t yet know precisely why Florida’s proposal was rejected, I cannot help but wonder if it isn’t due, at least in part, to what’s happening in Tallahassee right now. Ruling-party Republicans in the Florida House of Representatives have proposed an education budget for next year that would yield the lowest per-student funding Florida has seen since 2005. Additionally, there also are numerous draconian bills that would hurt our public schools.

“In these hard economic times, we cannot afford to miss real opportunities to develop true education reforms that would benefit Florida’s students, teachers, families, and our state’s economy.”

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