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President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford Continue Work Plan Florida Tour in Jacksonville

Jacksonville, Fla. – Senate President Don Gaetz (R-Niceville) and House Speaker Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) visited Jacksonville today on the fourth leg of their Work Plan Florida Regional Tour. Today's tour included a stop at the Jacksonville University (JU) Health Care Policy Summit, a lunch discussion with the Jacksonville Economic Roundtable and a meeting with Jacksonville Sheriff John Rutherford to discuss efforts to fight violent sexual predators.

"It was great to join President Gaetz in Jacksonville and hear from business leaders, healthcare industry leaders and members of Jacksonville's law enforcement community," said House Speaker Will Weatherford. "Florida is facing many critical challenges and I appreciated the opportunity to hear ideas on how to best solve them heading into the 2014 Legislative Session."

"Today we had the refreshing opportunity to step away from Tallahassee to hear from real people on the front lines of critical issues facing Florida," said President Gaetz. "From those in the health care industry who are dealing with the federal government's implementation of Obamacare, to business leaders who are looking to grow and expand the workforce, to law enforcement officers who are fighting to keep violent, dangerous offenders off of our streets and away from our children, these Floridians help us to see what we are doing right, what we are doing wrong and what we need to improve as we head towards the 2014 Legislative Session.

Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute Health Care Policy Conference
President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford joined a number of panelists to discuss current and future trends in Florida's health care policy, especially as it relates to the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Attendees of the policy conference included JU President Tim Cost, JU Board of Trustees, JU Public Policy Institute Board, faculty and students, healthcare organizations, local elected officials, and community leaders. President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford were joined by Senator Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach), Chair of the Senate Committee on Health Policy, and Representatives Janet Adkins, Halsey Beshears, Travis Cummings, Mark Danish, Daniel

Davis, Reggie Fullwood, Mike Hill, Mia Jones, Cary Pigman, Doc Renuart and David Richardson.

Jacksonville Economic Roundtable
President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford also visited the Jacksonville Economic Roundtable where they had the opportunity to discuss the Florida Legislature's efforts to address current challenges related to job growth and economic development by linking education to the realities of the economy. Specifically, the President and Speaker discussed Career and Professional Education (CAPE) legislation passed during the 2013 Legislation Session. This legislation, passed as part of the Speaker and President's Work Plan Florida agenda, provided for the creation of an online public research institute at the University of Florida and further integrated industry certifications into Florida's K-12 and state college systems through performance funding measures and more than 100 articulation agreements that enable K-12 students to earn college credit for completing industry certifications.

The Economic Roundtable of Jacksonville was founded in 1975 to provide a forum for economic issues and a network for local economists and those interested in business economics. The Roundtable is the Jacksonville chapter of the National Association for Business Economics (NABE) and includes members from a variety of industries and professions in business, government, academia and non-profit organizations.

Meeting with Jacksonville Sheriff John Rutherford
For their final stop in Jacksonville, President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford visited the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office for a meeting with Sheriff John Rutherford. The Speaker and President heard first hand from Sheriff Rutherford and Mike Williams, the Sheriff's Director of Investigations and Homeland Security, about the challenges law enforcement officers face in addressing sexually violent offenders.

President Gaetz and Speaker Weatherford were joined by Senator Rob Bradley (R-Orange Park), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Civil and Criminal Justice and Senator Audrey Gibson (D-Jacksonville), as well as Representatives Janet Adkins, Elizabeth Porter, Daniel Davis and Travis Cummings.

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