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Senate President Andy Gardiner and House Speaker Steve Crisafulli Announce Joint Priorities for the 2015 Legislative Session

Tallahassee – Senate President Andy Gardiner (R-Orlando) and House Speaker Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island) today announced their joint priorities for the 2015 Legislative Session, including tax relief, development of a sustainable water and natural resources policy, and increased education and employment options for people with disabilities on their list of “Work Plan 2015” shared initiatives. The presiding officers also outlined an effort to promote adoption of eligible children in foster care and emphasized a number of education initiatives designed to increase the state’s investment in schools while strengthening the accountability of Florida’s K-12 and higher education systems.

“I’m pleased to have the opportunity to continue the recent tradition of setting joint House and Senate priorities, and I look forward to working with President Gardiner and our Senate partners,” said Speaker Crisafulli. “The 2015 Work Plan is a broad package that presents five solutions for a stronger Florida.”

“We’ve seen what can happen when the House and Senate set priorities early and work together towards common goals,” said President Gardiner. “I’m looking forward to partnering with Speaker Crisafulli and our colleagues in the House to again accomplish a bold agenda of public policy initiatives that will influence Florida for generations to come.”

The 5-point “Work Plan 2015” joint agenda includes the following:

- **Tax Relief** – Reduce the burden government places on Florida’s families and businesses through broad-based, meaningful tax relief initiatives.
- **Economic Independence for People with Unique Abilities** – Support the path to economic independence for people with unique abilities by establishing new postsecondary designation for programs serving students with disabilities; expanding policy guidelines and increasing funding for Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts; promoting employment options for persons with developmental disabilities; creating financial literacy programs designed specifically to help people with developmental disabilities participate in the economy independently, planning for implementation of the

Achieving Better Life Experience (ABLE) program in Florida; and, establishing a “Unique Abilities Designation” program for Florida businesses who hire workers with disabilities.

- **Water and Natural Resources** – Develop a sustainable, statewide funding and policy strategy for water and natural resources while implementing Amendment 1.
- **Adoptions** – Promote adoptions and support forever families by restoring the adoption subsidy program for state and local government employees, codifying a family recognition program, and creating an incentive program for Community Based Care and provider agencies.
- **Education** – Elevating Florida’s investment in K-12 and higher education by increasing K-12 per student funding; keeping higher education affordable; increasing performance funding for universities; supporting Governor Scott’s initiative to reward technical centers that directly link education programs to local workforce needs; and, increasing opportunities for students to get on-the-job training in high-skill, high-wage areas through apprenticeship programs.

Promote accountability through an independent review and evaluation of federal, state and local K-12 assessment and evaluation requirements with the following guiding principles:

- ✓ **Accountability** – Maintain a strong accountability system that effectively measures student learning and promotes quality instruction in the classroom.
- ✓ **Transparency** – Increase transparency of accountability requirements so parents, students, teachers and taxpayers can have clear and consistent information.
- ✓ **Flexibility** – Maximize teacher, principal and school district flexibility to successfully implement Florida’s accountability system.

“Moving forward, much of the legwork, negotiations and compromise needed to finalize these initiatives will be completed at the committee level as individual Senators and Representatives work their bills through the process,” said President Gardiner. “We are looking forward to the work ahead and believe we have a solid foundation for a productive session.”

“This is an ambitious plan and each bill will face the same scrutiny that every other bill faces in the committee process,” said Speaker Crisafulli. “The House welcomes the opportunity to work closely with our Senate counterparts to deliver a completed Work Plan that will benefit all Floridians when the legislative session concludes on May 3rd.”

For more information regarding “Work Plan 2015,” please visit the [Florida Senate](#) and the [Florida House of Representatives](#) online.

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