

Florida's People Florida's Promise

Putting People First is Good Leadership and Good Business

www.floridaspeople.org

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 24, 2008

Contact: Dave Bruns
AARP Florida
850-577-5161 ofc
850 228-2759 cell

Liz Bruner
Children's Home
Society/FL
321-397-3000,
ext. 212 ofc
407-718-4868 cell

Debbie Mortham
Florida Coalition for
Children
850-561-1102 ofc
(850) 728-4273 cell

Robert Weissert
Florida TaxWatch
850-222-5052 ofc
850-224-7476 fax

Tampa citizens, advocates call on lawmakers for bold leadership to state fiscal crisis in Florida's People – Florida's Promise Town Hall event

TAMPA, Fla. (September 24, 2008) – More than 275 concerned Tampa Bay citizens and advocates for children, elders and taxpayers questioned a dozen Florida lawmakers and candidates for the Legislature on their plans to resolve Florida's worst state budget crisis since World War II in the latest of a series of Town Hall meetings sponsored by an innovative, broad-based coalition Wednesday.

The Florida's People, Florida's Promise initiative is conducting Town Halls for members of the public, candidates for the Legislature and elected legislators across the state during the election season.

The initiative is asking state lawmakers and candidates for bold leadership and creative solutions to the state's current budget crisis. A slumping economy and past tax cuts have knocked the state budget down from \$72 billion last year to \$66 billion this year. State revenue forecasters have warned lawmakers that the state faces another \$3.5 billion shortfall this fiscal year and next. So far, discussion in Tallahassee has focused on across-the-board budget cuts.

Facing deep cuts to vital services for abused and neglected children, frail older Floridians – and some cuts that actually will end up costing taxpayers more money in the long run – founders of the initiative are asking lawmakers for bold, innovative leadership. They are asking legislators to reorganize state programs to draw down additional federal funds, create savings in state agency operations, and consider targeted revenue increases that do not harm the state's business climate or harm Florida families.



Florida's People – Florida's Promise: An advocacy initiative founded by AARP, CBC of Seminole, Children's Home Society of Florida, Florida Coalition for Children and Florida TaxWatch.

2—

Florida's People Town Hall draws packed house

The standing-room-only event drew a broad range of Tampa residents concerned about deep cuts to services and the potential waste that could result from additional budget cuts.

For example, additional cuts increase the danger to our state's children, already at risk due to fewer sheriff's investigators and prevention services where they are needed most. More cuts also place Florida precipitously close to losing millions in federal funding by defaulting on a federal requirement that Florida maintain state funding for critical children's programs. Such a default also would cost us Florida's unique and much-needed Title IV-E Waiver that allows Florida flexibility in its use of federal child safety and permanency funds – flexibility that has been one factor that has helped Florida move from among the least effective states in providing services to abused and neglected children to one of the best.

Similarly, Florida ranks 41st in the nation in its use of Medicaid dollars to support home- and community-based services – even though helping a frail elder remain in his or her home could be far less costly than the \$4,500 per month Medicaid would pay to keep that elder in a nursing home. Yet more than 17,000 people remain on a state waiting list for Community Care for the Elderly, one of Florida's leading programs to provide home and community-based services to elders.

The Florida's People, Florida's Promise initiative was founded by AARP, Children's Home Society of Florida, Florida Coalition for Children, Florida TaxWatch and CBC of Seminole, a leading Central Florida provider of children's services. The next Florida's People, Florida's Promise Town Hall will take place Oct. 10 in Broward County.

For more information on the initiative or to sign the initiative's "Declaration of Inter-Dependence," please go to www.floridaspeople.org.