



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR DON GAETZ
President

TO: All Senators
FROM: Don Gaetz, President
SUBJECT: Work Plan 2014
DATE: January 29, 2014

History tells us confrontation is more likely than cooperation when two parties and two legislative chambers take on significant reform initiatives. Against those trends – and unlike our counterparts in Washington – we worked together as Democrats and Republicans, as Senators and Representatives to pass a far-reaching and positive Work Plan Florida agenda in 2013: the most sweeping ethics reform in 38 years; fair and sensible election laws; significant campaign finance reforms; transformational education policy; and real progress on local pension transparency. In addition, as a Senate we unanimously passed a balanced budget that funded Florida’s critical needs without raising taxes or fees by one penny. Individual Senators and Senate committees linked their efforts with House partners to produce watershed legislation in every substantive area of law. We were not perfect. We did not agree on everything. We left a few important opportunities on the table, and there is much more to do before we can claim victory. But our method – cooperation instead of confrontation – proved itself effective.

Today in Tallahassee Speaker Weatherford and I will meet with editors and reporters from across the state to lay out Work Plan Florida 2014. You will likely recognize every issue because these policy proposals have all come from Senators and Representatives, from the concerns and aspirations of the people you represent, and from the many hundreds of Floridians who met with Speaker Weatherford and me as we traveled the state together over the past three years. Of course, we know there are some issues that are pushed in front of the Legislature by circumstances we cannot control or calendars we do not choose. We have constitutional responsibilities we must meet. But there are other opportunities we can seize if we choose to risk ourselves for causes that matter to us.

There is no one I would rather have at the other end of the fourth floor than Speaker Will Weatherford. The accomplishments of this Legislature, in large part, are products of his skill, values, and vision.

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Drawing from the guidance you have given, Speaker Weatherford and I will commit publicly to work together to achieve five goals in 2014:

- * **Economic Opportunity Through Education**
Expand pathways out of poverty through education and job opportunities.
- * **Florida GI Bill**
Establish Florida as the “Welcome Home” state for military veterans and their families.
- * **Protect Vulnerable Floridians**
Increase safeguards for Florida’s children and seniors.
- * **\$500 Million Tax Cut**
Broad-based tax relief targeted to middle and lower income families.
- * **Improve Government Efficiency and Accountability**
Strengthen the retirement system for public employees by reforming the FRS, continue to improve ethics, and open government laws .

Our Senators are crafting and sponsoring key pieces of Work Plan 2014. Our Senate committees are already considering legislation. Representatives and Senators are sharing ideas, comparing approaches and coming closer together on products which can earn bi-partisan, bi-cameral approval and merit the Governor’s signature. While it is always easier in archery and politics to paint the target after the arrow is shot, Speaker Weatherford and I believe it is better to commit ourselves in advance to destinations that are good for Florida and then work out the pathways to get there.

Attached to this memo are more details about each of the five points of Work Plan 2014. Every word is in draft form. Every proposal can benefit from your ideas. We expect members of both chambers and both parties will help improve each other’s work products.

Thank you for the privilege of serving alongside you in these days of opportunity for Florida. Please continue to share your concerns, questions, criticisms and suggestions with Leaders Benacquisto and Smith and with President Pro Tempore Richter and me. Welcome back to work.

Cc: Speaker Weatherford

enclosure