“A Charge to Keep”

Charlie Crist’s Promise to African-Americans

Here in Florida, your family should be able to pay the bills, put food on the table, and save a little for the future. That’s why Charlie will focus on building an economy from the middle class out – not the top down. Every single day, he will govern by asking what his administration can do to make lives better for regular Floridians.

Rick Scott doesn’t share those priorities. His policies have benefitted the folks at the top and left the rest of Florida hanging out to dry. He’s passed tax cuts for corporations and special interests while letting taxes and other costs increase for middle-class families. Florida families are hurting — and Charlie is ready to help.

After his inauguration, Governor Crist will focus on:

1) Developing Minority Businesses

Charlie understands the value that diversity brings to our business community. When minority-owned businesses are successful, they improve Florida’s entire economy.

Rick Scott has a dismal record with minorities, and his lack of support for their businesses’ development is clear. Last year Rick Scott vetoed $1.2 million for four minority small business development centers. In 2013 the legislature appropriated $1.2 million to launch a minority small business development initiative for the Urban Leagues of Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa. The Florida program would have been modeled after the National Urban League’s Entrepreneurship Center model, which currently operates in nine cities, has created or saved 5,453 jobs, and has generated $24.6 million in new contracts and financing since its inception. Though the Florida legislature had approved the funding, Rick Scott vetoed it.

“Charlie understands us, cares about us, and will fight for us every day. The African American community needs a leader who will have our backs – who will be our advocate in Tallahassee. Charlie is that fighter. Stand with him. He stood with us before and he will do it again.”

-- former State Senator Tony Hill

"Rick Scott has done nothing to support minority businesses. We need a Governor who will support minority business leaders and their employees to help them achieve success. Charlie Crist will be that Governor, and I urge you to support him."

– Florida House Minority Leader and State Representative Perry E. Thurston, Jr.
Giving minority businesses a fair shot at success is a priority for Governor Crist. There currently is no coordinated, statewide strategy to maximize their potential. Charlie is committed to fixing this problem.

After his election, Governor Crist will create a new position, called the Women and Minority Business Advocate, who will work within the Department of Economic Opportunity and report directly to the Governor’s Office. This person will be responsible for monitoring the state’s progress on diversity, assisting women- and minority-owned businesses with utilizing state resources available to them, and identifying policies that will support their success.

In addition, Gov. Crist will direct the new minority business advocate to strengthen the state’s minority-owned business certification process. Only true minority businesses should be designated as such. Charlie will also insist on more accountability for state contractors who hire minority subcontractors. Governor Crist will work to ensure that any company abusing the system – and not honoring its partnering commitment to its minority subcontractors – will face stiff penalties.

2) Strengthening our workforce by raising Florida’s minimum wage to $10.10.

Charlie believes that Florida’s workers deserve a fair wage for their hard work, and he is not alone. A recent poll showed that 73% of Floridians agree that we should raise the minimum wage.³ While Rick Scott says the thought of raising the minimum wage makes him “cringe”,⁴ Charlie knows that raising the pay of low-wage workers improves their productivity, their morale, and the quality of their work, while at the same time reducing turnover and supervisory costs.

³“When I hear a politician say that we have to raise the minimum wage so working families can make ends meet, I cringe…”
-- Gov. Rick Scott, as reported by the Tampa Bay Times, 1/8/2014

3) Helping our children and young adults live up to their full potential

As Governor, Charlie made record investments in education. He saved the jobs of more than 20,000 teachers and promoted job training because he understands that a good education system starts with quality teachers.

Rick Scott has failed to take care of our kids. He cut education funding by more than one billion dollars in his first year in office — leading to the loss of thousands of teaching positions and higher college tuition costs. And per-student spending under Gov. Scott is still almost $200 less than it was under Charlie’s leadership.

"Rick Scott’s cuts to education have hurt African-American children throughout Florida. We need Charlie Crist to get our schools back on track."
- Miami-Dade School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
Charlie Crist will help our children live up to their full potential by:

a) Reversing Rick Scott’s cuts to Education

Once elected in November, Governor Crist will set to work undoing the damage Rick Scott has done. He will reverse Scott’s education cuts by returning per-child funding to more than $7,100, a total increase of $515 million to the K-12 budget. That’s a big number, but it will take deep investment to undo Rick Scott’s damage to education.

Governor Crist will also restore the cuts that Scott has made to pre-kindergarten. He’ll raise the per-child funding level to at least $2,562, the level it reached when he was Governor. This will cost at least $20 million, but Charlie knows that Pre-K is one of the best long-term investments we can make for our children.

b) Making College More Affordable

Rick Scott has made it more difficult for students and their families to afford college. As Governor, he slashed $300 million from Florida’s universities and he has cut Bright Futures scholarships in half. This year under Rick Scott, 50,000 fewer students will receive a Bright Futures scholarship than when Charlie Crist was Governor. And the cuts to Bright Futures hurt minority students most. As noted by the Miami Herald, “two-thirds of black freshman who would have qualified in past years did not receive an award last year.”

To make college more affordable, Charlie Crist will restore Bright Futures to the record levels it reached when he was Governor. To do so, Charlie will push the legislature to expand eligibility so that 180,000 students will receive Bright Futures scholarships – 50,000 more than what Rick Scott funded for this year.

Rick Scott hasn’t been a friend to Florida’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Funding for Bethune-Cookman University and Florida Memorial College was completely eliminated from Rick Scott’s first spending plan. Charlie Crist, however, funded HBCUs every year he was Governor for a total of $45 million. Charlie supported Florida’s HBCUs during his first term and he’ll do it again after his inauguration.

Charlie also believes that higher education is a transformational opportunity for American families. When that first member of a family gets a college degree – whether a parent or child – higher education often becomes the rule rather than the exception for everyone who follows. College education opens the doors of opportunity for lower income families. It also elevates Florida’s entire workforce, making us more attractive to higher-wage industries.

Some of Florida’s higher education institutions have developed innovative need-based scholarship programs – like the American Dream scholarships at Miami-Dade College – which help more low-income students and “first-in-the-family” students to attend college. Charlie believes that every young Floridian should have a chance to succeed, and he’ll work to expand these models so that more Floridians have the opportunity to realize the American Dream.
As Governor, Charlie will also create the **Florida Student Loan Refinancing Authority** to help qualified borrowers refinance their loans at lower rates. His administration will issue bonds to refinance the loans -- and the bonds will be paid back by borrowers – so no taxpayer dollars will be used for refinancing. In addition, the loan authority will help prospective borrowers make informed decisions by providing them with detailed information and counseling about their financing options, *before* they commit to loan agreements.

### c) Providing Opportunities for High-Paying Jobs to Young Floridians

Students drop out of high school or college for a number of reasons, such as the stress of financial challenges or the difficulty of balancing school with commitments to family and jobs. But a primary reason is that many Florida students cannot see a clear, real connection between their academic studies and opportunities in our state’s labor market.

With this in mind, we need to do a better job of preparing our students for their next steps after graduating high school. Once elected in November, Charlie will work with our school districts, our local business communities, regional workforce boards, community colleges and universities to develop an “**Opportunity Pipeline**” -- a comprehensive strategy that promotes a stronger connection between education and business at the regional and local levels.

Charlie believes that local business and community leaders know more about their workforce needs than Tallahassee politicians do. As such, he will help form **Regional Opportunity Planning Councils** with representatives from the business community, educational institutions, workforce boards – as well as other stakeholders. These partnerships will develop strategies to give students more exposure to the real business world by greatly expanding internships and apprenticeships in Florida’s high-demand industries.

Governor Crist will also work to increase the number of internships available at Florida’s business incubators, so that young people can work alongside the entrepreneurs who are building start-up companies and creating new innovations.

**Charlie is committed to providing young African-Americans with real opportunities that can inspire them for the rest of their lives.** When minority students see first-hand the exciting work taking place in Florida businesses, they’re more likely to do well in school so they can become our next generation of innovators. With hard work and determination, these interns and apprentices might just create the next Apple, Google, or Microsoft – right here in Florida.
4) Helping African-American families stay healthy

Charlie believes in bringing Democrats and Republicans together to expand health care for all Floridians. Unlike Rick Scott, he knows we can’t go back to the days when insurers could charge folks higher premiums for preexisting conditions or drive folks into bankruptcy just for being sick.

As Governor, Charlie will bring back $51 billion of our own taxpayer dollars to extend access to quality healthcare. We’ll help one million Floridians obtain coverage, create 120,000 jobs, and save $800 million in healthcare costs over the next ten years. Rick Scott’s fear of the Tea Party prevents him from taking action, but Charlie will fight to expand access to affordable healthcare for Florida’s families. It’s the right thing to do – for our people and for our economy.

5) Fighting back against voter suppression

In a democracy, voting is a fundamental right.

When people were stuck waiting in line in 2008, unable to cast their ballots, Charlie extended voting hours so that every citizen who wanted to vote could do so. Members of the Republican Party told him he was handing the election to President Obama — but Charlie knew it was the right thing to do for Floridians, so he did it.

Rick Scott rolled back that progress. In 2011, he directed the legislature to pass laws that made it harder to vote. He put unnecessary restrictions on voter registration and reduced the number of places where Floridians could vote early.

Charlie will fix this in his first thirty days in office, with the singular goal of creating a simpler and more secure method of voting. He stood up for voters’ rights in 2008, and he’ll do it again once he’s elected in November.

"Rick Scott made it harder for us to vote. Charlie Crist defended our democratic rights. He expanded early voting because he believed then and he believes now that every vote deserves to be counted."

– Senate Democratic Leader-Elect Arthenia Joyner

6) Automatically Restoring Voting Rights for Those Who Deserve a Second Chance

We all make mistakes, and Charlie believes in forgiveness. He knows that non-violent offenders who have completed their sentences and paid their fines and restitution should have their rights restored. It’s simply the right thing to do.

During his first term as Governor, Charlie presented a plan to the Florida Clemency Board that would automatically restore rights to nonviolent felons who have fully completed their sentences and paid all fines and restitution. Though some amendments were added, the proposal passed in a historic 3-1 vote by the Board. The new Clemency Rules weren’t perfect, but they streamlined the restoration process and enabled 150,000 Floridians to have their rights automatically restored while Charlie was Governor.
After Rick Scott became Governor in 2011, he and the Cabinet reinstated barriers that denied people their right to vote and added a minimum five-year waiting period. Since those changes, only 1,200 have had their rights restored.

As Governor Crist said in 2007, some of those who want to maintain the current system argue that restoring civil rights is somehow “weak on crime,” as if restoring the right to vote, to serve on a jury or to work lessens the punishment or encourages a person to commit new crimes. In fact, the opposite is true. Giving a person a meaningful way to re-enter society, make a living and participate in our democracy encourages them to turn over a new leaf.

Only two other states – Virginia and Kentucky – require offenders who have completed their sentences to apply to have their rights restored. Charlie believes that justice delayed is justice denied. This is about fundamental fairness, and people are waiting. Once elected in November, Governor Crist will push to amend the Rules of Executive Clemency so that civil rights are once again automatically restored for those who deserve a second chance. He did it before, and he’ll do it again.

7) Ensuring that Governor’s Appointees Reflect Florida’s Diversity

Florida’s governor makes thousands of appointments to leadership positions throughout the state: judicial posts; water management districts; housing, hospital, transportation, airport, and port authorities; Boards of Trustees for Florida’s public universities and colleges; professional boards; and many more.

Rick Scott’s record is appointing minorities has been well-documented. “He has no interest in diversity,” said State Senator Arthenia Joyner, D-Tampa, a member of the legislature’s black caucus and the incoming Senate Democratic leader. “He wants to stack the courts with people who think like him. It’s that corporate mentality that he brought to the governor’s office.”

Charlie knows that one of Florida’s greatest strengths is its rich and vibrant diversity. This understanding drives his commitment to appoint individuals who reflect the diverse backgrounds and talents of our state’s people.

The $515 million needed to restore Rick Scott’s cuts to education is calculated by: Charlie Crist’s record per student funding amount of $7,126 – Rick’s Scott’s 2014-15 per student amount of $6,937 = $189, then multiplying that by the number of expected students for the 2014-15 year (2,724,520.69) = $514,934,409.69.

The net federal cost of $51 billion is the estimated cumulative amount for Florida for the state fiscal years of 2013-14 through 2022-23, and is based on the most recent 10-year projections, provided by the Florida Legislature’s Office of Economic and Demographic Research at its Social Service Estimating Conference on March 7, 2013.

Governor Crist’s state budget recommendations for FY 2007-08 ($12.1 million), 2008-09 ($12.3 million), 2009-10 ($10.8 million), and 2010-11 ($9.8 million).

Per student funding level of $2,533 (2008-09 funding level) x 180,000 (approximate number of Bright Futures recipients during 2010-11) = $455.9 million. $455.9 million - $266.2 million (Politifact’s estimate of BF dispersals during 2014-15) = $189.7 million needed to reverse Rick Scott’s cuts. NOTE: These calculations do not adjust for inflation, so the cost to restore Rick Scott’s cuts to Bright Futures is even greater in 2014 dollars.

Governor Crist appoints 23, and is based on the most recent 10-year projections, provided by the Florida Legislature’s Office of Economic and Demographic Research at its Social Service Estimating Conference on March 7, 2013.