

Search

Site Archives - Free since 1987 Web go



Most emailed

- [Busch Gardens to end 50-year flow of free beer](#)
- [Citrus grove grew with owner's passion](#)
- [FBI bribery arrests shake up sleepy Levy County](#)
- [The pet sitter: a warm and fuzzy calling](#)
- [Family remembers a take-charge type with caring side](#)

Essays & Analysis

- [Iraq: a violent, sort-of peace](#)

Special report

- [Cookie recipes! Here are 26 sweet surprises to bake and share for the holidays. Plus, you'll find links to tons of recipes from years past.](#)
- [More special reports](#)



Video report

- [Friday Night Rewind It doesn't matter which team you cheer for. We've got video previews of every high school football program in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco and Hernando County.](#)
- [More video reports](#)



Multimedia report

- [Winter's tale A baby dolphin's rescue transforms the lives of those around her.](#)
- [More multimedia reports](#)



Public servants need help

By Jeanette D. Wynn, Special to the Times
In print: Monday, December 29, 2008

The wonderful weather of this holiday season reminds us of the magic that has drawn millions to our beautiful state. The physical environment of Florida is truly a gift of our creator.

However, the human infrastructure of Florida — the health, education, transportation and general quality of life — is entirely the responsibility of the state's citizens and leaders.

Maintaining the business, residential and recreational structures of our state requires a strong public sector — cities, counties, schools, universities and the state itself — to provide roads, educate workers and protect the public safety.

Gov. Charlie Crist recently rewarded the selfless service of our state workers during the holidays. The state Career Service employees represented by AFSCME thank Gov. Crist.

Nice as it is, two days will not defuse the demographic time bomb facing Florida government if it fails to invest in the human beings who provide vital services to the public. In the coming years, the state will lose the expertise of thousands of baby boomers who will retire.

The expertise of these career public servants has allowed Florida to continue to function despite having the smallest, cheapest and most poorly paid state government per capita in the nation.

Over the past 10 years, wages for state workers have fallen against inflation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a worker making \$20,000 a year in 1999 would need to make \$25,996 today to have the same buying power. The same state worker, though, would be making \$23,422 this year and would require a 10 percent pay raise to equal their earnings a decade earlier.

Recruiting the qualified professionals who will serve the future of Florida will require investment in salaries, staffing levels and technology. The average state professional employee earns \$33,348 per year. Many of the professionals must have graduate degrees and maintain certifications at their own expense.

The Florida Retirement System must remain the keystone of the Career Service system as the primary incentive for workers to dedicate decades in public service. A terrible idea broached by some would end the FRS for new employees, forcing new hires into a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k). Although this may seem to offer portability to workers, it will have a detrimental effect on agencies as the powerful incentive to stay is eliminated.

In these terrifying times for state workers, AFSCME has not criticized Gov. Crist or our legislative leaders. They and the career professionals on their staffs have spent months of work to find areas to reduce without hurting vulnerable populations.

Although furloughs are preferable to layoffs, unpaid leave for employees across the board would be unfair and counterproductive. It is fundamentally unfair to treat those who make the least the same as those who make more than \$50,000.

Story Tools

- [E-mail this story](#)
- [Print this story](#)
- [Contact the editor](#)
- [Comment on this story](#)

Social Bookmarking

- [Digg](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Del.icio.us](#)
- [Stumbleupon](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Newsvine](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

I cut down **25lbs** of stomach fat in **1 month** by obeying this **1 rule**

[read more >>](#)



News

- [Singh: Pakistan Agency Had Hand in Attack](#)
- [Raw Video: Pro-Gaza Demonstrations in Asia](#)
- [AP Top Stories](#)

Subscribe to the Times

[Click here for daily delivery of the St. Petersburg Times.](#)

Email Newsletters

Be the first to know. Register for free breaking news alerts and morning headlines.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

In addition to the cost side of the ledger, state leaders should shore up the revenue side by closing sales tax exemptions, examining fees, expanding gambling, raising tobacco and alcohol taxes, and ending corporate loopholes that favor out of state companies. These changes will bring Florida in line with other states and make tax treatment fairer by requiring participation by those not paying their fair share for our infrastructure.

If the state of Florida benefits from fiscal stimulus funds, the quickest way for those funds to make their way into the Florida economy is by increasing the salaries of state workers themselves.

Our leaders must confront the reality of our government crisis and explain the need for revenues to preserve core services. The people of Florida love our beautiful state and will support public officials who invest in its future.

Jeanette D. Wynn of Quincy, retired after 30 years at Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, is president of AFSCME Florida Council 79, the union representing 55,000 state Career Service employees and more than 30,000 workers at state universities, cities, counties, school boards, and private/nonprofit hospitals.

[Last modified: Dec 28, 2008 03:30 AM]

You found it!
tampabay.com/coupons

tampabay.com
 Know it now.

<p>State Health Insurance Find Low Cost Health Insurance. One Quick Form. Multiple Offers. www.InsuranceDesk.com</p>	<p>401k Retirement Rollover, Cash Out or Leave in Plan Get a Free 401K Guide from Wachovia www.WachoviaSecurities.com</p>	<p>Ads by Google</p>
--	--	----------------------



© 2009 · All Rights Reserved · St. Petersburg Times
 490 First Avenue South · St. Petersburg, FL 33701 · 727-893-8111
[Contact Us](#) | [Join Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe to the Times](#) | [RSS](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Standard of Accuracy](#) | [Terms, Conditions & Copyright](#)