



PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jennifer Fennell
PHONE: (850) 222-3767
EMAIL: jennifer@coremessage.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 17, 2011

CONTACT: Jennifer Fennell
850-222-3767
jennifer@coremessage.com

Pro-Business Legislators Honored with AIF Champion for Business Awards

TALLAHASSEE – Reflecting a year when a record number of Florida legislators scored perfect or near perfect scores on the annual Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) Voting Records Report, the statewide business association today honored its largest class of Champion for Business award winners. Selected to receive the prestigious *2011 Champion for Business* awards are 18 Florida Senators and Representatives. The awards will be formally presented to winners during the Champions for Business ceremony held in conjunction with AIF's Annual Conference in August.

Following the conclusion of the legislative session, these awards are annually presented to leaders who have proven to be strong and forceful advocates for Florida's business community. Champions for Business are chosen for their support of meaningful and often controversial pro-business legislation that benefits employers and their workers.

“This was the year for reforms. Lawmakers reviewed, refined and, in some cases, completely overhauled systems that had ceased to function efficiently, properly or as intended. Major reforms to Medicaid, property insurance, unemployment compensation, the state's pension system and a number of tort/legal reform bills will help create jobs, decrease government spending and improve our overall economic climate,” said Barney T. Bishop III, President and CEO of AIF. “We commend these lawmakers for addressing tough issues and taking bold steps to radically alter the way our state conducts business. Beyond the measures our Champions for Business successfully passed this session, many award winners are also being recognized for the anti-business bills they were able to defeat, including the divisive immigration reform proposal that would have hurt Florida businesses. AIF and its members thank each recipient for their advocacy on behalf of the business community.”

The 2011 award winners are:

- **Sen. JD Alexander (R-Lake Wales)** – As the Senate Appropriations Chair, Sen. Alexander reduced government spending and balanced the budget without increases in taxes or fees for employers despite record budget shortfall. Additionally, Sen. Alexander played a pivotal role in the defeat of immigration reform legislation that could have required employers to comply with the flawed E-Verify employee verification system. This is his second Champion for Business award.
- **Sen. Ellyn Bogdanoff (R-Ft. Lauderdale)** – A first-time Champion for Business award winner, Sen. Bogdanoff is recognized for her sponsorship of legislation that addressed the calculation methodology for judgment interest. Thanks to her leadership, revisions to the

current law create a more balanced formula for applying interest to damage awards and afford businesses a more level playing field in the courtroom.

- **Sen. Anitere Flores (R-Miami)** – Receiving her third Champion for Business award, Sen. Flores has continued her strong leadership and advocacy on behalf of employers as a new member of the Senate. Serving as Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, she presided over a number of legal reform priorities for the business community, including deliberations over the controversial immigration reform legislation proposed this year. Throughout this emotional and contentious debate, Sen. Flores allowed all sides to articulate their opinions in a fair and balanced environment, and repeatedly advocated on behalf of employers.
- **Sen. Jack Latvala (R-St. Petersburg)** – Returning to the Senate this year, Sen. Latvala sponsored important legislation that streamlines port security measures and eliminates duplicative requirements. In addition, his leadership was instrumental in defeating immigration reform legislation that would have been harmful to Florida’s economic recovery. This is his first Champion for Business award.
- **Sen. Joe Negron (R-Palm City)** – Sen. Negron received his second Champion for Business award this year for his role as the principal negotiator behind the sweeping Medicaid reform package passed by the Legislature this session. Medicaid reform, and the establishment of a managed care model, remains a top priority for the business community due to the potential cost-savings associated with having state government retain control over dollars spent on health care for Florida’s most needy.
- **Sen. Garrett Richter (R-Naples)** – For his efforts on one of the top legal reform bills this session, Sen. Richter becomes a three-time Champion for Business award-winner. Previously, Florida was the only state that prohibited the introduction of evidence relating to a driver’s condition at the time of an accident when a driver sues an auto manufacturer over the “crashworthiness” of a vehicle.
- **Sen. Jeremy Ring (D-Margate)** – The only Democrat receiving a Champion for Business award this year, Sen. Ring is recognized for his leadership on legislation impacting Florida’s corporate income tax structure. The Single Sales Factor creates an incentive for corporations that invest a substantial amount in capital infrastructure, which will enable Florida to better compete with other states. This is Sen. Ring’s second Champion for Business award.
- **Sen. David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs)** – Sen. Simmons is receiving his first Champion for Business award for his commitment to the education system and his efforts to provide greater flexibility to school districts as they comply with Florida’s class size amendment and annual student reporting.
- **Rep. Chris Dorworth (R-Heathrow)** – Receiving his first Champion for Business award, Rep. Dorworth is recognized for his sponsorship of a proposed constitutional amendment that could protect first-time homebuyers from property taxes and cap the annual change in assessed value for commercial property to 5 percent. If passed by voters, these important changes will hopefully spur Florida’s housing market and provide commercial property owners with much-needed tax relief.

- **Rep. Doug Holder (R-Sarasota)** – Rep. Holder’s advocacy for important reforms to unemployment compensation tax benefit awards, which will help reduce frivolous claims that drain the system, have garnered him his first Champion for Business award.
- **Rep. Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange)** – A two-time Champion for Business award winner, Rep. Hukill played an instrumental role in the passage of the state’s major property insurance reform package, as well as legislation further expanding the deregulation of commercial insurance lines in Florida.
- **Rep. Marlene O’Toole (R-The Villages)** – As the prime sponsor of AIF’s top legal reform bill, Rep. O’Toole earned her first Champion for Business award by fighting to bring fairness to the way Florida juries hear “crashworthiness” cases. Despite amendments to alter the bill’s intended purpose, Rep. O’Toole was successful in passing a bill with the strongest protections for auto manufacturers.
- **Rep. Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City)** – Rep. Patronis is receiving his second Champion for Business award for spearheading a major rewrite of Florida’s environmental permitting laws. Keeping the needs of the business community in mind, Rep. Patronis advocated for meaningful reductions in regulation and greater efficiencies in the system.
- **Rep. Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel)** – Speaker-designate Weatherford is receiving his second Champion for Business award for his staunch support of meaningful legal reform. This session, the Speaker-designate ensured tort reform bills were passed out of the House, including legislation for fairness in “crashworthiness” cases and curbing abuses in our state’s medical malpractice system.
- **Rep. Trudi Williams (R-Ft. Myers)** – The business community’s point person on issues related to the state’s water policy, Rep. Williams is receiving her first Champion for Business award for addressing water issues of importance to Florida’s employers, as well as the negative consequences of federal water quality standards pressed on Florida by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Rep. John Wood (R-Haines City)** – For his role in championing the major property insurance reform bill this session, Rep. Wood is receiving his first Champion for Business award. As the House’s chief property insurance reform negotiator, Rep. Wood pushed for proposals that will concentrate on the cost drivers currently affecting the property insurance system and help rejuvenate the state’s private property insurance market.
- **Rep. Ritch Workman (R-Melbourne)** – A first-time Champion for Business award winner, Rep. Workman’s efforts led to major reforms in the state pension system. By bringing Florida’s pension plan more in line with the private sector through this package of bold reforms, the state will save more than \$1 billion.
- **Rep. Dana Young (R-Tampa)** – The only freshman receiving a Champion for Business award, Rep. Young was the prime sponsor of a bill eliminating duplicative and costly security credentials at Florida’s deep water ports. By passing this legislation, Florida is no longer at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring states and is better prepared to meet the demands and opportunities presented by the expansion of the Panama Canal.

In addition, several of AIF's Councils – groups of member employers that share a common subject area or interest – presented specific Council Awards in the areas of: financial services; maritime; development and infrastructure; and environmental sustainability. The 2011 Council Legislators of the Year award winners are:

Financial Services Council

- **Sen. Steve Oelrich (R-Gainesville)** for sponsoring and helping to pass one of the insurance industry's top priorities in 2011 – commercial insurance deregulation legislation.
- **Rep. Brad Drake (R-DeFuniak Springs)** for sponsoring and helping to pass commercial insurance deregulation legislation in the House of Representatives, a top priority for the insurance industry this session.

Florida Maritime Council

- **Rep. Joe Abruzzo (D-Wellington)** for sponsoring emergency management legislation vital to improving business continuity for the maritime industry and employers in general.

Florida Development & Infrastructure Council

- **Sen. Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton)** for sponsoring and helping to pass the Council's top legislative priority – reforming Florida's 25 year-old growth management laws.
- **Rep. Gary Aubuchon (R-Cape Coral)** for sponsoring and passing legislation that removes the statutory limitation placed on the use of affordable housing dollars.

Environmental Sustainability Council

- **Rep. Ken Roberson (R-Port Charlotte)** for sponsoring and passing legislation that will help accelerate the permitting process in Florida by shifting the burden of proof away from business owners during permit challenges.

Established by AIF in 2003, the Champion for Business awards program was created to acknowledge the efforts of lawmakers who sponsored and defended pro-business bills, as well as those who worked behind-the-scenes on legislation critical to the prosperity of Florida businesses.

The *2011 Champion for Business* awards were announced following the release of AIF's annual Voting Records Report last week. AIF tracked more than 18,000 votes cast on 146 business-related bills and amendments. Members' votes, which include committee and floor votes, are used to generate a percentage ranking of votes made in favor of pro-business legislation.

For more information on AIF's *2011 Champion for Business* award recipients and the *2011 Voting Records Report*, visit www.aif.com.

###