

Chief Financial Officer



Alex Sink

CFO's Primary Role Is Financial Watchdog

As Florida's Chief Financial Officer, I wear many hats but my first job is protecting Floridians' pocketbooks.

First, I oversee the Department of Financial Services, which keeps track of all money coming into and going out of state government—an amount that totals more than \$70 billion annually. It is my mission to make sure our taxpayers' dollars are being spent wisely and efficiently, and that citizens have a place to get financial advice or blow the whistle on fraud and abuse. I also serve as a member of the Florida Cabinet and help oversee your \$120 billion retirement fund (Florida Retirement System), the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida Highway Patrol.

As Chief Financial Officer, I additionally serve as the State Fire Marshal and oversee two sworn law enforcement divisions recognized nationally for aggressive work and arrest rates higher than the national average. The Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations is the law enforcement branch of the Division of State Fire Marshal that investigates possible criminal activities as it relates to fire. This Bureau conducts approximately 4,200 investigations each year involving fires, explosions, fireworks and other fire and arson-related incidents. Arson detectives have full powers of arrest to charge persons suspected of being involved in arson-related activities, and the Bureau has two mobile arson response vans and a Forensic Investigative Support Team (FIST) response/command bus, all fully equipped with state-of-the-art equipment to aid in processing the fire scene. The Bureau's 105 sworn detectives receive nearly 4,000 requests for investigations every year and make about 500 arrests annually. The Bureau's arrest clearance rate of 30 percent is well above the national average of 18 percent.

The Bureau also is a member and participant in Florida's emergency response/mutual aid plan. The Bureau is assigned three functions for emergency response in the areas of Law Enforcement (ESF 16), Firefighting (ESF 4) and Search and Rescue (ESF 9). In addition, the services of the state arson laboratory, one of only three of its kind in the nation, is available to any investigative or law enforcement agency in Florida. While fire debris examination is the lab's primary type of analysis, it can also analyze and identify chemical components used in explosives, reaction bombs, and clandestine laboratories. The lab also offers digital and video analysis as well. Video taken from cameras at a Daytona Beach Wal-Mart was recently used to identify two arson suspects.

The Division of Insurance Fraud is the law enforcement arm of the Department of Financial Services responsible for investigating crimes associated with insurance claim fraud, insurance premium fraud, workers' compensation claim fraud, workers' compensation premium avoidance and diversions, insurer insolvency fraud, unauthorized insurance entity fraud, and insurance agent crimes. The Division also investigates viatical application fraud, defalcations of escrow funds held in trust by title insurance firms, and non-Medicaid related health care fraud. Nearly half of the Division's investigations involve organized fraud.

The Division receives approximately 13,000 case referrals annually from insurance companies, insurance regulators, other law enforcement agencies, and citizens, and makes approximately 800 arrests each year. The Division's work is directly responsible for

annual court-awarded restitution to insurance fraud victims of more than \$102 million. Only one state insurance fraud bureau surpassed Florida's enforcement record last year and that was California, which has a budget roughly three times the size of Florida's and 127 more positions than Florida.

During this year's regular legislative session, the Legislature eliminated 22 vacant law enforcement divisions and added 30 positions with starting salaries for those positions increased by \$7,000. We hope this will enhance our ability to retain and recruit qualified personnel in a competitive employment market with other state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Division's investigative practices include interviewing witnesses and subjects, interrogating suspects and persons of interest, conducting fixed and mobile surveillances, obtaining and executing search warrants, obtaining and managing oral intercept warrants, obtaining subpoenas for financial records and other records, utilizing mobile tracking tools, tracing monetary transactions, and making both probable cause and warrant arrests. Crime intelligence analysts and sworn investigators also prepare demonstrative evidence and exhibits

for presentation in court, and also testify, along with detectives, in depositions and before state and federal courts.

The Division's biggest resource in the fight against insurance fraud is referrals, and the department offers a reward of up to \$25,000—depending on the amount of potential loss—for information directly leading to an arrest and conviction. Since 2001, the Fraud Fighter program has

issued rewards totaling \$94,000.

As the state's fiscal watchdog, I am determined to cut waste, fraud and abuse, and insurance fraud—including arson—which costs the average Florida family as much as \$1,400 a year in higher insurance premiums and higher costs for goods and services.

I'm also going to be looking for more efficient ways to serve the taxpayers, whether by evaluating the state's current privatization efforts or state spending. I'm already working with the Governor to take a look at how we contract in this state, and I believe there are a number of precautions we need to be taking on the front end to safeguard the people's tax dollars.

As your Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal, I thank you sincerely for working every day to protect Florida's families and communities, and for working with the department's law enforcement agencies to protect our citizens from arson and insurance fraud. Our strong partnerships make Florida a safer and more economically viable place to raise our families and conduct business, and I pledge to be responsive to your suggestions and concerns in improving our service to Floridians. ■

"...I thank you sincerely for working every day to protect Florida's families and communities..."

A Parent's Quick Reference Card Recognizing and Preventing Gang Involvement

This quick reference guide provides common warning signs of gang involvement, but may not be all-encompassing. Parents should look for multiple signs to indicate possible gang involvement because some of these indicators alone, such as clothes or musical preferences, are also common among youth not involved in gangs. Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with local gang symbols, seek help early, and consider contacting school personnel, local law enforcement, faith leaders, and community organizations for additional assistance.

Warning Signs That Your Child May Be Involved with a Gang

- Admits to "hanging out" with kids in gangs
- Shows an unusual interest in one or two particular colors of clothing or a particular logo
- Has an unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, movies, or websites.
- Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
- Has specific drawings or gang symbols on school books, clothes, walls, or tattoos
- Comes home with unexplained physical injuries (fighting-related bruises, injuries to hand/knuckles)
- Has unexplained cash or goods, such as clothing or jewelry
- Carries a weapon
- Has been in trouble with the police
- Exhibits negative changes in behavior such as:
 - Withdrawing from family
 - Declining school attendance, performance, behavior
 - Staying out late without reason
 - Displaying an unusual desire for secrecy
 - Exhibiting signs of drug use
 - Breaking rules consistently
 - Speaking in gangstyle slang



Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal Alex Sink with (left to right), Florida PBA's Legislative and Political Affairs Assistant Ken Kopczynski, Executive Director David Murrell, and Deputy Executive Director Matt Puckett.