

A Message From Your
Executive Director



David Murrett

The Pickle We Are In

Things have been better, much better, than here in Florida lately. That's especially true for public employees and those dependent on the services they provide. For a variety of reasons, public employees, services, and everyday citizens are getting squeezed like never before. The so-called housing bubble has burst with many homeowners facing foreclosure on houses they can no longer afford. Out of sight insurance rates, escalating property taxes because of the suddenly much higher evaluations, higher interest rates, you name it. This has put the average citizen in a pickle, and all of this is trickling down to state and local governments. Unfortunately, the impact of this is pretty drastic on our way of life—given that local government is overly dependent on the vagaries of property values and property taxes; state government is overly dependent on the real estate market and sales taxes generated by the tourism and building industries. When any of these factors get out of kilter, our quality of life is in the crosshairs. State and local governments go into a panic mode. [See Matt Puckett's article and accompanying information on pages 14 and 15.]

For state government, this is a pretty big hole that we find ourselves in, and it will take a while to dig our way out as sagging home sales and slowing construction woes find a way to sort themselves out. On a more general level, it would be helpful if the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission would find a way to broaden our state tax base and put something on the constitutional ballot which is both helpful and passable. The current situation of being just about solely dependent on the construction and

tourism industries to finance state government is just asking for trouble and a continuation of the wild gyrations of state finances. I guess we can always dream that politicians will do what is right in this regard.

In the meantime while we are all waiting, impatiently, for all of this mess to sort its way out, there are a few things that individuals can do to help their situation. A common denominator for many of these ills is the outrageous cost of homeowner and business insurance. It's a question of how high the rate increases will be and, more and more common, a question of whether insurance can be obtained from private insurers, period. If you are one of those individuals who is having, or about to have, problems with insurance, I implore you to take advantage of a web site set up by **Governor Crist** as a means to help consumers. Think your insurance company is gouging you? By pulling up "Shop and Compare," you can see what insurance companies are charging in your particular county. I've done it, and it's amazing at the discrepancies in rates. Many people have used this site and have been able to get much lower rates (in the thousands of dollars in some cases). Also, there are now a number of new insurance companies in the state that are more than competitive with some of the older, more well known insurance companies. However, as Governor Crist mentioned to us in our recent meeting with him, in addition to insurance reforms that he and legislators are doing, citizens also need to do their part by taking the initiative to seek lower rates when possible. We couldn't agree more. **The Governor's "Shop and Compare" web site may be found at www.shopandcomparerates.com**

“Too bad the only people who know how to run the country are busy driving cabs and cutting hair.”

~ George Burns



Family members, friends and associates of slain FHP Trooper Alvin Kohler, along with (standing L-R) FHP Ret. Major Joseph Chancey, Florida PBA President John Rivera, FHP Lt. Col. David Brierton, and FHP Chapter President Bill Smith testified against his killer at the Florida Parole Commission meeting on August 29, 2007.



L-R: FHP Lt. Col. David Brierton (fourth from right), President Bill Smith, Dade County PBA Chaplain Al Lopez, and John Rivera listen at the Florida Parole Commission meeting.



President John Rivera provides PBA's view of why the murderer of Officer Kohler should not be paroled.



Packed room at the Florida Parole Commission meeting.