



# PBA Helps Charlie

## GOP candidates, apparently, love a parade

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For the briefest of moments Saturday, Florida's GOP primary centered on a single street corner in Keystone Heights, a small Clay County town named for Pennsylvania. That's where both **Tom Gallagher** and **Charlie Crist** showed up for a Labor Day parade.

But it was clearly Crist who had the hometown advantage. The parade organizer was a member of the Police Benevolent Association, Gallagher's campaign later learned. And eight vehicles, including a Jeep Crist stood in the back of, showed up for the parade, all filled with Police Benevolent Association members wearing PBA T-shirts supporting Crist. There was also

PBA complimentary water, passed out along the route, and PBA Frisbees Crist tossed from the Jeep.

Gallagher, who walked with wife **Laura** in front of his own bus, which was wrapped with his message to "Keep Florida in the Right Lane," crisscrossed the road to shake hundreds of hands as his band of about a dozen supporters walked with him, throwing Jolly Rancher candy. And among the trio of sticker styles up for grab from Gallagher's crowd, "Gators for Gallagher" was by far the most popular. ●



Florida PBA Executive Director David Murrell with Charlie Crist as he receives a plaque expressing appreciation for attending the 2006 Keystone Heights Jr. Chamber of Commerce "Down Home Pride" Labor Fest Parade.



Florida PBA Organizational Services Director Jim Wiggins hands out "PBA Supports Charlie Crist" T-shirts as the parade winds its way through Keystone Heights.

## Tom Gallagher hopes for a come-from-behind victory against the popular Charlie Crist

09/03/2006 © Gainesville Sun (Excerpts)

STARKE - There are few places a politician won't go to win a vote in the last few days before an election, even a restaurant's meat freezer in rural North Florida.

**Charlie Crist**, the state's attorney general and the front-runner for Tuesday's Republican gubernatorial primary, spent a few minutes Saturday in the chilly back room of Western Steer, a restaurant in this town of about 6,000 between Gainesville and Jacksonville.

"Look at all this meat," he shouted over the sound of the freezer, holding a plastic-wrapped tray of raw steak to the amusement of two restaurant workers.

**Tom Gallagher**, the state's chief financial officer, was also in North Florida, hoping a few laps in a pace car at the Daytona International Speedway would turn into a metaphor for a come-from-behind victory.

That is undeniably Crist's strong suit. He spent nearly an hour waving signs and dodging cars to pass out bumper stickers in the heavy traffic heading to the University of Florida football game in Gainesville on Saturday. He implored some to "Crist-en" their vehicles with the bumper stickers.

His schmaltzy humor was a hit in Starke earlier in the day. After dashing into the kitchen to meet dishwashers and cooks, he jokingly jumped behind the cash register and surprised a lunchtime visitor.

"I'm Charlie Crist," he said. "I'm running for governor, and I'll give you good service." He then grabbed the real staff and hugged them for a photo, dubbing the teenage girls "Charlie's angels."

Everywhere Crist went in a criss-crossing of the state last week, folks had similar stories.

Crist embraces the populist role in this campaign, promising supporters in Starke that if elected governor, he would institute "Tallahassee Tuesday" where citizens could come visit the Capitol and talk one-on-one with the governor.

"If I win, they're my boss and I want to hear from them," Crist said. "I think it's important to keep the common touch."

Ironically, in a state that takes 16 hours to drive from tip to tip, the candidates crossed paths Saturday in Keystone Heights, a town of about 1,350 near Starke.

But there was no handshake at the Labor Day parade, even though Gallagher was talking in the parade's staging area when Crist arrived across the street.

**The attorney general didn't stop with the others, instead jogging to the head of the line where his Police Benevolent Association supporters had reserved spaces for pickups filled with Crist supporters. They even managed to lead off the parade with a sign proclaiming, "Law Enforcement Supports Charlie Crist."**

Once the parade started, Crist started flipping Frisbees promoting his candidacy along the parade route. He called out, "Did you vote for me?" as he threw a 30-foot strike to **Dana Marcus**, a retired lawyer from Melrose.

"Absolutely," said Marcus, who says he likes the job Crist has done as attorney general. His wife, a Democrat, says she plans to vote for Crist in November if he wins Tuesday's primary.

"He's a Ronald Reagan Democrat," said **Paula Timmins Marcus**. "Gallagher's a little too conservative. I don't want to say Religious Right because I'm a Christian, but I want somebody who can work well with others." ●



The Labor Day Parade in Keystone Heights with PBA leading the way.



Future Governor Charlie Crist and Florida PBA Executive Director David Murrell tossing frisbees and footballs to the parade attendees. The Jeep was driven by Becky Welborn, wife of Florida PBA Staff Rep Paul Welborn.