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Governor Crist Applauds Florida's Number One Workforce Ranking

~ Florida reclaims top spot; among top three for third consecutive year ~

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist, continuing his commitment to strengthening Florida's workforce and economy, today announced that Florida has been ranked number one in the nation for its workforce by CNBC. The ranking came in CNBC's fourth annual America's Top States for Business rankings — a study of all 50 states that examines 10 different categories, including workforce, to measure each state's ability to attract businesses. Florida moved up from the number three spot in 2009, reclaiming the number-one ranking the state held in 2008.

"The Sunshine State is home to the best talent in the world," said Governor Crist. "We are committed to creating a highly skilled, innovative workforce across all industry sectors, and we take great pride in the role our workforce plays in driving Florida's businesses into the 21st century."

The workforce rankings in CNBC's annual study are based on several indicators, including the education level of the workforce, the number of available workers, union membership and the relative success of each state's worker training programs in placing participants in jobs. Workforce Florida Inc., the state's business-led workforce policy and oversight board largely appointed by Governor Crist, is charged with strengthening Florida's business climate and helping Floridians enter and advance in the workforce.

"We are committed to providing Floridians and businesses with the tools they need to ensure Florida's competitiveness in the global marketplace," said Workforce Florida Chair Belinda Keiser. "To receive the number-one ranking for the second time is a testament to the tenacity of our workforce, and to the excellence of Florida's programs and collaborative partnerships that ensure we are able to create and sustain highly skilled talent."

Most employment and training services in Florida are provided at the local level through the state's 24 regional workforce boards, the backbone of the state workforce system. Key leadership is also provided by the Agency for Workforce Innovation, which is charged with administering workforce services in Florida.

In 2009, Florida's workforce system provided services including job search, referrals and placement assistance as well as training to more than 1.7 million people.

The workforce ranking is one of the most heavily weighted categories in determining each state's total score in the CNBC study, along with the cost of doing business and

quality of life. This year, Florida placed number 28 in the study's overall ranking for top business states for the second consecutive year.

Since its 2000 inception, Workforce Florida has developed and directed numerous successful initiatives aimed at addressing the state's workforce needs. Among them are Quick Response Training (QRT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants, which reimburse businesses for a portion of the cost of training employees. Recently, Workforce Florida developed a new, five-year state strategic plan with statewide input from Florida businesses and the education sector. The plan confronts the challenges of getting Floridians back to work while focusing on the most promising opportunities to diversify the state's economy by strengthening talent development at every level of Florida's Talent Supply Chain.

Through the recently launched Microsoft® Elevate America initiative, an innovative public-private partnership, free technology training is available to Floridians for a limited time. Another recent workforce-system initiative, responding to a real-time need confronting the state, is the creation of the Florida Gulf Recovery Jobs web portal at www.floridagulfrecoveryjobs.com. The portal is dedicated to helping Floridians access information about jobs stemming from recovery and cleanup of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

To view the CNBC workforce rankings, go to <http://www.cnbc.com/id/37516706>. To find out about the comprehensive workforce services and resources available in Florida, visit www.EmployFlorida.com.

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