

Here are a few talking points from the Florida's People - Florida's Promise "Town Hall" Meeting that was held in Palm Beach County on September 18th. The Haven was one of the sponsors of this meeting, which was well attended by many of our state legislators and challenging candidates. We are facing further budget cuts in 2009, but key to the issue is assuring that our legislators avoid indiscriminate cuts "across the board." We are very close to losing Federal matching dollars for children's services if we cut funding below the minimum amount each state is required to spend to receive matching Federal dollars. It is imperative that the legislature not cut funding to children's programs to the point that it would create a "double whammy" resulting from the loss of both state and Federal dollars. Our legislators need to be educated to this issue so that they make informed decisions on budget cuts and do not jeopardize Federal matching dollars for children's programs. The legislative arguments from both democrats and republicans alike often relates to the lack of funding. There are several funding solutions that were also suggested by FFPF and they are also included in the following talking points:

How are children's services affected?

Last year, the legislature cut **\$18.9 million** for services to abused, neglected and abandoned children. They also cut \$2.9 million from child abuse and neglect investigation programs operated by sheriffs' offices. Now, the Florida Department of Children and Families has been forced to hold back an additional **\$15.9 million** in general revenue and trust fund monies from child welfare agencies this year and \$1.2 million from sheriffs' child safety programs.

What sort of federal funding does Florida receive?

Florida ranks fifth highest in the nation in per-capita taxes paid to Washington but ranks only 24th per-capita in federal funds received. We are 46th of all 50 states in federal grants received. If we merely received the average federal dollars distributed to states, it would mean an additional \$6.5 billion per year. We lost \$344 million in funding for the Agency for Health Care Administration alone.

And we're precipitously close to losing millions in federal funding for foster children by defaulting on our Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement, the minimum amount each state must spend on services to foster children. If the legislature cuts these services more, **we may lose as much as \$20 million**, as well as our much-needed Title IV-E Waiver that allows Florida flexibility in its use of federal child safety and permanency funds.

What solutions do Florida's People, Florida's Promise see that the legislature can do to make up for the shortfalls?

Collect state sales tax on Internet and other forms of remote commerce as is currently allowed by Florida law. Revenue estimates for Florida vary but national estimates are as much as \$15-\$20 billion. Currently 44 states participate in a program to collect state and local sales taxes on Internet, catalog and toll-free hotline sales. Florida does not participate so our cities and counties also lose their average local sales tax of 1.5 percent.

Federal revenue maximization would raise millions of dollars and keep money in Florida. Though Florida is eligible for more federal support, our legislators don't always structure state law to qualify us to receive maximum federal funding. Taxes that Floridians pay to the federal government routinely benefit other states that do a better job at maximizing federal revenue.

Centralize government regulatory checks. Florida businesses and nonprofits have long found teams of state regulators knocking on their doors – often, four or five different state and local regulators visiting the same business in a single year. And often they seek the same information but, since regulatory agencies operate in silos and don't share information across audit teams, inefficiency costs millions that could be more wisely spent.