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**FLORIDA'S TEACHER UNION STANDS IN WAY
OF BOLD EDUCATION REFORMS IN FLORIDA**

Florida's Teacher's Union Costs Students and Teachers \$1.1 Billion in Race to the Top Funding

**Statement from Mark Wilson, President and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce,
on the "Race to the Top" Award and closing Florida's looming talent gap:**

"(TALLAHASSEE, FL--) The Florida Chamber of Commerce is proud of the bold and innovative application that Florida submitted in support of Democratic President Obama's Race to the Top initiative. Florida Department of Education Commissioner Eric Smith and his team of educators, superintendents, teachers and many others are to be congratulated for the many months of superior work involved in creating an application that we believe was first-rate and future oriented. Unlike in Florida, the teacher's unions in Tennessee and Delaware fully supported the Race to the Top initiatives. In Florida, the state union opposed President Obama's reform effort and only five local unions supported the bold effort.

Unfortunately, the teacher's union in Florida has proven time and again that they are not interested in transforming the way we educate our students so our graduates can be better prepared for the 21st century workforce. While Florida was not one of the states chosen to participate in the first phase of the Race to the Top initiative, our resolve is strengthened to submit again by June 1 for an opportunity to receive up to \$700 million. Today's decision clearly demonstrates Florida's need for additional reform in education standards as well as in boldly moving to pay for performance (SB6) for future teachers. In the future, we hope the union will fight for higher teacher pay and innovative reforms to further improve Florida's education system.

In Florida, five local teacher unions supported the Race to the Top application: Duval, Hamilton, Hillsborough, Jefferson and Sarasota, and those local unions are to be congratulated for their commitment and courage to raising the bar in education for their counties. Sadly, their counties will not be receiving the nearly \$100 million combined they would have been awarded had teachers' unions from around the state supported this important initiative.

Florida's teachers are the unsung heroes of our state; they deserve to be rewarded for their dedication and hard work. The Florida Chamber of Commerce supports education initiatives that can position Florida as a leader in the global marketplace, and the Race to the Top initiative is another important element in helping us achieve that goal. We are committed to helping Florida become the number one state in the country in education outcomes, and we must start by supporting measures such as higher pay for high-quality teachers and increased graduation rates for our students.

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Established in 1916 as Florida's first statewide business advocacy organization, the Florida Chamber of Commerce is the state's largest federation of employers, chambers of commerce and associations, representing more than 139,000 employers. The Chamber works within all branches of government to affect those changes set forth in the annual Florida Business Agenda, and which are seen as critical to the continued improvement of Florida's business environment. Visit www.FloridaChamber.com.