



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Florida Chamber of Commerce Calls for Doubling of Florida Exports in Six Years**

**(Tallahassee, FL.)** – The Florida Chamber of Commerce announced today that it is pushing for Florida to double its exports in the next six years. The announcement came at International Days, a two-day policy and networking event that brought several panels of international business experts to Tallahassee this week. International business and its impact on Florida were the focus of the conference that promotes and highlights the significant role international business plays in Florida's economy.

International business accounts for about 14% of Florida's economy and for nearly 1.2 million jobs. Despite the global recession and its impact on Florida's economy, international trade was one of the strongest sectors in the state in 2009. More than 48,000 Florida companies export, accounting for 18% of all U.S. exporters. In six years, the Chamber expects that number to double.

"In today's economy, nearly all businesses—large and small—are affected by global competition," said Mark Wilson, President and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. "It's critical that we understand the dynamics of international business in our state and the impact it has on our economy. Last year, Florida's combined exports amounted to nearly \$75 billion, sustaining more than 1 million jobs in the state. As we continue to grow our exports, we will continue to develop jobs, the life-blood of our economy."

The Florida Chamber's International Days' policy discussions included plans to boost our country's exports. Components of the plan that will enable success include: opening foreign markets; enforcing trade agreements; modernization of export control; resisting economic isolationism; and promoting exports. Florida is poised to support these initiatives and lead the country in the international trade arena.

"We look forward to working with our partners in Florida's international trade community to promote all that we have to offer—from port access and trucking routes to goods and services," said Representative Lake Ray. "Now is the time to ramp up our efforts in order to keep pace with the economic growth in key export markets."

International Days, held during the Florida Legislative Session, allowed participants and organizations to meet with Florida's legislators and promote the importance international business plays in the economic development of their communities.

The conference, hosted by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, included comments by Governor Charlie Crist and Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, as well as remarks by Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink, and Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum, both candidates for Governor, and Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Bronson.

Expert panel discussions and a town hall meeting gave participants an opportunity to raise issues and report on their organizations' activities in the international arena.

Chris Hart, Director of the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, moderated a panel on "Florida's International Tool Box," which gave an overview of Florida's international business programs in agriculture, tourism, exporting and foreign direct investment. Members of the panel included Charlie Bronson, Commissioner of Agriculture; Manny Mencia, Sr. Vice President of International Business Development, Enterprise Florida; and Chris Thompson, President and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA. Other discussions focused on Export Financing, Florida Freight and Trade Study, and Trade Policy: Things You Should Know.

Results of a Florida Chamber-sponsored Trade Study will be released in May.

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