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TALLAHASSEE - Governor Jeb Bush today delivered his eighth and final State of the State Address, opening the 2006 Legislative Session by calling on the Florida Legislature to take the State’s progress to the next level. Governor Bush outlined the need for more education reform, greater emergency preparedness and increased economic development.

“Our state faces the challenges of this new year armed with record employment, record financial reserves, and record revenue. We have the resources to meet the needs of our state and invest in our future. We also have the will, the discipline, and the proven strategies to use them effectively to continue our progress toward our vision of all that Florida can be. This is the year we do even more,” said Governor Bush.

In his annual address to a joint session of the Legislature, the Governor outlined the following areas:

- **EDUCATION** - Since 1999, Florida’s public schools have undergone significant reforms that have fostered rising student achievement. Governor Bush urged the Legislature to do even more - by adopting critical reforms to bring rigor and relevance to middle schools and make middle grades count more than ever for students in Florida. The reforms will require students in grades 6 through 8 to earn 12 credits in math, science, language arts and social studies before they are promoted to high school, ensuring they enter those higher grades with the knowledge required for success. At the high school level, the reforms will add relevance by allowing students to choose a major based on their career paths and interests. Their choices will reflect their interests, challenge them, and prepare them to build a future of their own design. For more information on the Governor’s proposals for education reform, visit <http://www.myflorida.com/myflorida/eogadmin/showPress.jsp?press_id=7321>.

- **DISASTER RESPONSE** - Florida’s disaster response is the most effective in America and serves as a national model. Governor Bush urged the Legislature to do more to make the best in the country even better. The Governor outlined the State’s campaign to create a “Culture of Preparedness,” including a proposal for a permanent 12-day sales tax holiday on hurricane preparedness items. Governor Bush also outlined plans for retrofitting older homes, making the State’s building code uniform statewide, upgrading vulnerable county emergency operations
centers, expanding shelter space and upgrading special needs shelters. For more information on the Governor’s proposal for hurricane preparedness, visit <http://www.floridadisaster.org>.

➢ **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** - For more than 30 months, Florida has created more jobs than any other state. Businesses continue to relocate or expand to Florida, creating more opportunity for our residents. Entrepreneurs and businesses are drawn here because Florida’s tax structure lets them keep more of what they earn, ensuring the highest returns on their investment of capital. Governor Bush outlined his plan to continue the rising tide for our State’s economy. Included in his plan are $1.5 billion in tax relief for Floridians and $630 million in economic development programs to lure high paying industries to Florida. For more information on the Governor’s proposal for economic development, visit <http://www.myflorida.com/myflorida/eogadmin/showPress.jsp?press_id=7141>.

“I’m honored to stand with Governor Bush as he outlines an ambitious agenda for our final legislative session,” said Lt. Governor Jennings. “Florida has seen tremendous progress in the past seven years, but success is never final and the opportunities remain endless. Together we must continue striving to improve the quality of life for the more than 17 million residents who call our great state home.”

For more information on the Bush/Jennings administration budget recommendations for the coming year, please visit www.myflorida.com <http://www.myflorida.com>.