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**LT. GOVERNOR JENNINGS UNVEILS *FLORIDA reBUILDS* INITIATIVE TO ASSIST WITH LABOR SHORTAGE AND HURRICANE RECOVERY**

**TALLAHASSEE-** Lt Governor Toni Jennings today announced the creation of *Florida reBuilds*, an initiative to counter the growing shortage of construction workers and assist the state in the recovery from devastating hurricanes. The program combines the resources of the State's Workforce and Education systems and will train and recruit workers through the Employ Florida network of One-Stop Centers.

"Even before hurricanes caused significant property damage in our state, we were experiencing a shortage of workers in the construction field," said Lt. Governor Jennings. "The continued recovery from the last two hurricane seasons and the continued expansion of Florida's booming economy depends upon having an adequate supply of skilled trades workers to meet the demand. In meeting that demand, we are also creating employment opportunities for many Floridians whose jobs have been affected by the hurricanes."

The Lt. Governor was joined for the announcement by Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation Susan Pareigis; Department of Education, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education Chancellor David Armstrong; Workforce Florida Board of Directors Chair Tramm Hudson; Workforce Florida President Curtis Anderson; President of the Florida Homebuilders Association Len Tylka; Associated Builders & Contractors of Florida, Inc. Chairman Gary Stout; Florida Roofing, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contracting Association Legislative Counsel Anna Cam Fentriss; and Florida Regional Council of Carpenters Representative Elsie Allen.

"The Employ Florida network is proud to be making this critical investment to boost the economy of our state," said Tramm Hudson, Chair of the Workforce Florida Board of Directors. "We are creating opportunities for many of our fellow Floridians and at the same time we are helping our businesses grow."

The Agency for Workforce Innovation recently completed a Job Vacancy/Hiring Needs survey of 50,000 Florida employers. The survey was conducted during the summer of 2005 and collected information never before available at the state level. The survey covered current job vacancies, education and experience requirements, benefits, and hiring expectations over the next six months. The survey showed that there were 13,712 vacancies in construction fields with pay averaging \$14.79 per hour. These jobs accounted for more than 8% of total job vacancies identified in the survey.

Funded with \$6 million in existing Workforce Florida funds, the *Florida reBuilds* initiative will initially provide short-term, entry-level training for up to 4,000 individuals statewide, enabling them to enter into the construction trades with emphasis on the

attainment of an industry-recognized credential. Training will be available for trades such as roofing, masonry, carpentry, concrete finishers, plumbing, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), electricity and heavy equipment operations. The initiative will also provide advanced training to up to 1,000 existing workers in the industry enabling them to acquire additional skills and certifications to advance in the industry. To ensure a continued adequate supply of skilled trades workers, Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Jennings will recommend \$12 million in the 2006-2007 budget for continuation of the program, providing the funding necessary to train an additional 6,000 individuals.

Candidates for *Florida reBuilds* will be registered and enrolled through the Employ Florida network of One-Stop Centers and employers will use the network to hire workers at no cost. Training will be designed and developed by the Florida Department of Education in conjunction with industry groups in the state. Training will be conducted by Florida's workforce

system, state universities, community colleges, vocational technical centers and independent workforce training providers.

More information about *Florida reBuilds* can be found at [www.employflorida.com](http://www.employflorida.com) <<http://www.employflorida.com>> or by calling 1-866-FLA-2345.

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