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Press Release

Florida AFL-CIO President Mike Williams' Statement on Governor Rick Scott's Decision to Block High Speed Rail and Thousands of Jobs **"...reckless, politically driven decision"**

"The Governor's decision to reject over \$1.25 billion in federal funds to bring Florida into the 21st Century with a desperately needed high-speed rail project has dealt a devastating blow to tens of thousands of workers and families across Florida. The state's unemployment rate is stuck in double digits and regardless of the Governor's claims, state and federal agencies have forecasted that it will take four years and 900,000 jobs to return us to pre-recession levels. The creation and operation of a high speed rail line connecting two of the largest urban centers in the state would have created as many as 48,000 higher wage jobs in Florida, jobs that Floridians are desperate to fill. I can't imagine what this news will do to the families of the construction workers and other skilled tradesman who were counting on this project to help them survive. Over the past two years, the Legislature touted rail as the future and pushed aggressively to create the SunRail commuter project in Central Florida. This project handed out hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funded gifts to a private, politically connected corporation with little promise of new job creation. This was a golden opportunity to move forward with a rail project that guarantees tens of thousands of jobs. Unfortunately, many have changed their tune simply by virtue of who is in the White House pushing this much needed opportunity. This is politics over policy to the detriment of the people of Florida. The Governor seems to think that cutting taxes for the biggest corporations, gutting regulations that keep our communities safe and giving taxpayer funded bailouts to well connected special interests is the only way to create jobs. In Florida, we have been doing that for the past twelve years yet our unemployment rate is stuck at 12%, one of the highest in the nation. How can he expect to create jobs by doing the same things his predecessors have been doing for over a decade? The Governor is also looking to make draconian cuts to the lifeline benefits for our unemployed workers, arguing that people could find work if they wanted to. How many people will find that task so much harder after this reckless, politically driven decision."