

## **FLORIDA HOSPICES AND PALLIATIVE CARE WELCOMES THE NEW GOVERNOR**

Representatives from Florida Hospices and Palliative Care were pleased to attend the inauguration of Governor Charlie Crist (R) and the members of the Florida Cabinet who each took the oath of office on Tuesday, January 2.

On the East Portico of the Old Capitol, well-wishers and political leaders gathered to watch the administering of the oath of office. Charlie Crist took the oath of office as the 44<sup>th</sup> Governor of Florida, being sworn in by Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice, Fred Lewis.

In his short inaugural speech, Crist began by highlighting some of the threats on the immediate horizon. The issues ranged from oil drilling to property taxes. He promised to protect Florida's environment, our quality of life and economy, and said he would promptly address the twin threats of rising homeowners' premiums and property taxes sapping Floridians' pocketbooks. But the overarching theme of his speech was that Florida is a great place to live – in fact, the greatest place to live -- that the future is bright and the best is yet to come. Offering a pledge of bipartisanship, Crist spoke of areas that both political parties want to see improved and suggested that they can and will work together to achieve affordable health care, expanded worker benefits, improved schools, better protected neighborhoods, and clean rivers, beautiful beaches and coastlines free of oil drilling. He also pledged to make government more open, accessible and understandable; vowing to sign an Executive Order requiring government to communicate in simple language to the extent possible.

Governor Crist knows hospice issues, too. During his service as a State Senator and as the Attorney General, he listened to the concerns of our members and acted admirably. His father is a medical doctor in Pinellas County, so he is very familiar with health care issues, and particularly with elder health care issues. As Attorney General, his office promoted the use of advance directives and living wills. We look forward to continued work with Crist in his role as the Governor of Florida. “I’ve known Governor Crist since his days in the Florida Senate, and worked closely with him as the Attorney General for passage of the Florida Civil Rights Initiative in 2003, and I’ve always found him willing to listen, true to his word, and incredibly hard-working” said Paul Ledford, Executive Director, of Florida Hospices and Palliative Care.

Crist is no newcomer to the Florida Cabinet, having served as the last elected Commissioner of Education (formerly a Cabinet post), and most recently as the Attorney General. The other Cabinet veteran is Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Charles Bronson (R), who was sworn in for a second term. The newcomers to the Florida Cabinet are Attorney General, Bill McCollum (R), a former Republican U.S. Representative, and Chief Financial Officer, Alex Sink (D), the former State President of Bank of America. Sink is married to the Democratic Party's 2002 gubernatorial nominee, Bill McBride.

With respect to Attorney General, Bill McCollum, Ledford said, “I worked with Bill McCollum when I was at the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and anticipate that we will have a good working relationship.” “And true to form, as occurs in every election year – there has been a game of musical chairs among the senior management teams in the Florida Cabinet, and now long-time friends from other agencies are serving in the AG’s Office,” chuckled Ledford.

The other newcomer, Alex Sink, is the lone Democrat on the Cabinet. Sink drew nearly as much attention as Governor Crist in the political circles in Florida, because she has demonstrated that a political newcomer in the Democratic Party can win a statewide election and garner bipartisan support. “Sink has relationships with some of our members, and I am confident that she will hear us out when our issues come before the agencies that she oversees,” commented Ledford. “She has such a high energy level, and is so bright and personable -- I really look forward to seeing her serve in this role,” Ledford added.

After the oaths of office were administered four F-16 fighter jets swooped low overhead and black-powder cannons fired a twenty-one gun salute to the new chief executive. It seemed a fitting end to the grand tradition of peaceful transition of power from one administration to another.

Florida Hospices and Palliative Care welcomes Charlie Crist as our new Governor of Florida.

1-09-07