

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2009-1001

TITLE: Resolution Urging the Florida Legislature to Adopt Legislation to Mitigate Budget Cuts

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SPONSORS: Senator Ben Cavaturo

WHEREAS, the State of Florida is in a budget crisis, with a \$3 billion shortfall predicted for the 2008-09 budget year, threatening another round of damaging budget cuts for public universities and other public services; and

WHEREAS, the University of Florida Board of Trustees approved \$47 million in budget cuts in May 2008 following last year's state budget cuts; and

WHEREAS, an additional round of budget cuts would almost undoubtedly lead to more devastating consequences for the State University System and the University of Florida, including more layoffs of tenure- or tenure-track faculty and the wholesale elimination of courses, departments, and degree programs; and

WHEREAS, the budget crisis is so dire that state government leaders proposed raiding the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund for children and seniors to make up for the shortfall; and

WHEREAS, Florida's cigarette tax is just 34 cents per pack, the sixth-lowest in the nation, and has remained unchanged since 1990; and

WHEREAS, a poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies found that 79 percent of Florida voters surveyed supported the proposed cigarette tax increase, and 71 percent think the state's current tax is too low; and

WHEREAS, a proposed \$1 increase in the cigarette tax would bring in at least \$700 million in additional revenue, according to the Florida Legislature's chief economist; and

WHEREAS, in addition to mitigating budget cuts, an increase in cigarette taxes would also disincentive smoking, saving taxpayer money in future health care costs; then

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Student Senate of the University of Florida urges the Florida Legislature to adopt H.B. 3A or similar legislation increasing the cigarette tax to \$1.34 to mitigate the substantially negative impact of budget cuts; and

Proviso: That a copy of this resolution be sent to Governor Charlie Crist; Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Ray Sansom; and President of the Florida Senate Jeff Atwater.