

*Tallahassee Democrat "My View, September 10, 2008*

### **Tourism dollars are poorly spent**

If Gov. Charlie Crist is serious about saving Tallahassee's in-state flights by Delta (as reported Thursday), he'll have to do it without the help of the Leon County Tourist Development Council.

Approved 6-1 by the County Commission (I dissented) on Sept. 2, the TDC decided to spend \$400,000 - half its reserve account - to try to reverse falling ticket sales for Florida State and Florida A&M football games this year and next. That leaves the TDC without reserve funds to help save Delta's in-state flights here, or for other worthy efforts. It was an especially bizarre decision given that this year's Seminole Boosters budget is \$34 million, with a year-end \$4 million operating surplus. The surplus would add to its already bulging reserve accounts that include about \$67 million in cash and marketable securities.

Despite our repeated requests, the TDC has yet to produce a strategic plan to help expand our tourism economy in the face of challenges such as lousy air service, no passenger rail service, reduced driving, and other impacts of the oil price explosion. So spend it all first, then plan.

Call me crazy, but I think we should spend TDC tax funds on projects with a better yield than a handful of football weekends, and instead expand tourism choices here.

After all, isn't boosting ticket sales the job of the Seminole Boosters, and not the taxpayers?

**BOB RACKLEFF**  
Leon County Commissioner