



# ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA

*The Voice of Florida Business Since 1920*



## 2009 SESSION PRIORITIES



---

# ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA

---

## COUNCILS



The Councils of Associated Industries bring together unique sectors of the business community in order to develop and promote issues vital to those respective industries. The following pages represent the 2009 Legislative Agendas for each of the eight councils within AIF.

# International Affairs



*International Affairs Council  
Lobbyists: Al Cardenas,  
Stephen Shiver*

**A**IF and its International Affairs Council (IAC) recognize the tremendous value international trade represents for Florida's economy.

According to Enterprise Florida, the total value of merchandise trade flowing in and out of the U.S. through Florida's 14 seaports and 20 major airports reached approximately \$115 billion in 2007. Florida's continued competitive edge in the global economy depends on maintaining our international trade dominance in the western hemisphere. Florida leads the nation in serving as the regional corporate headquarters for over 300 companies from Latin America and the Caribbean. Florida also continues to emerge as a leader in the country on foreign investment reaching \$39.3 billion in investment last year. In 2006, Florida ranked 5th nationally for employment by foreign firms with over 248,000 Florida-based jobs. A key ingredient to maintaining a balance of trade that is friendly to Florida businesses is a continued and aggressive marketing strategy abroad. In 2008, the Governor led an aggressive trade mission to Europe visiting the UK, France, Russia and Spain.

Florida exporters need global opportunities to showcase Florida merchandise and talent. Florida companies are key suppliers to buyers across the Americas. Critical access to foreign investment and markets is gained through regular trade missions. In fact, during the 2007 trade mission to Brazil over \$300 million was generated in actual and anticipated sales. Since 1999, over 1,270 Florida executives have participated in trade missions, resulting in more than \$700 million dollars in actual and expected sales for Florida companies.

Trade missions target key markets of specific opportunities to Florida. High level meetings are held to promote Florida's economic advantages, generate trade and reverse investment and develop linkages in the target markets. Specific networking opportunities are also created for businesses that participate in the mission.

Despite the growing importance of international trade to Florida's dynamic economy, state funding for Florida trade missions has been steady over the past years at just over \$5 million annually. Emphasis should be placed on establishing diverse economic development programs that cater to the global economy. Preparing our workforce for this multicultural environment is vital to achieving this goal.

## Council Priorities

**A**IF's IAC applauds Governor Crist's support of international trade and his commitment to maintain Florida's prominence in the global market. AIF and the IAC are currently working on efforts to:

- **Enhance funding for international trade activities; and**
- **Provide support at the federal level for the passage of additional free-trade agreements with countries like Colombia, who are vital trade partners for our state.**

## Council Position

The IAC believes that businesses, small and large, all across Florida benefit from Florida's position as a hemispheric hub for international trade. Florida businesses get the opportunity to act as a key supplier to buyers around the globe and sell goods made locally in Florida to global markets. Increased funding for trade missions equals increased opportunity for Florida exporters to access tailor made programs of business-to-business appointments and prearranged meetings with prospects. For public policymakers, the sales generated represent a return on the investment of public funds in the form of an enhanced tax revenue base.