



# Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater's DOLLARS & SENSE

Florida Department of Financial Services

## Dear Fellow Floridians:

Floridians deserve to know what's going on in their government. Their tax dollars are used to fund it and, if they choose to look, they should be able to see how those dollars are spent. Thankfully, our state's history of operating openly dates back a long time — all the way to 1909.

Since then, Florida's transparency practices have grown and evolved. In 1976, the Government-in-the-Sunshine Law was passed that granted Floridians access to government meetings. A call was made by the people, for the people. A call for accountability, trust and transparency — and Florida was forever changed.



*Graphic Courtesy of the First Amendment Foundation*

Why am I telling you this now? It's Sunshine Week, the one week a year that's set aside to celebrate Florida's access to information. Hosted by the First Amendment Foundation, it serves a reminder that the 20 million people of Florida are watching, and that leaders have a duty to honor that commitment to operating openly.

During my time in public office, I've tried to do my part as well.

When I first took office in 2011, no one person could definitively report how many contracts Florida had in place with outside vendors. Given the sheer size of Florida's budget, a lack of transparent accountability threatened to open the door for waste, fraud and abuse. It didn't go unnoticed and an independent organization called the Public Interest Research Group actually gave a "D" on their "Following the Money" report that tracks state spending.

Something had to be done to get us on track, and I made a commitment to get the information together and to put it all online. So, we created the Florida Accountability Contract Tracking System, more commonly known as FACTS, in 2012. This first-of-its-kind, comprehensive online tool offers Floridians unprecedented visibility into what contracts have been established, and how much money has been spent for a particular good or service.

But we didn't stop there. Each year, we've worked to make the system more accessible and user-friendly for Floridians. FACTS now includes contact audits, grant award information, and even scans of actual contracts executed by state agencies. By putting contract amounts right on the web, it leveled the

### Stay Connected



Increase Text Size



### In This Issue

**Volume 14 Number 11**  
**March 15, 2017**

Message from the CFO on Sunshine Week

News of Interest

*Florida's Bottom Line: Read All About It*

Operation S.A.F.E., Be Scam Smart Workshops

Florida Economic Briefs

Print PDF

### Archives

March 2017  
February 2017  
January 2017

2016 Issues

2015 Issues

2014 Issues

2013 Issues

2012 Issues

2011 Issues

All Issues

### Quick Links

Subscribe

playing field for business owners who wanted to bid for state business. This also meant that there was far less opportunity for back-door deals done far away from inquiring minds.

I'm proud to say that each year I've been in office, our score on the "Following the Money" report has improved. Our state's access to financial information has gone from one of the lowest in the nation to cracking the top 10 list. Florida now has an "A."

For more information about the Florida Accountability Contract Tracking System (FACTS) and to see how your money is being spent, visit [www.MyFloridaCFO.com/Transparency](http://www.MyFloridaCFO.com/Transparency).

Good governance is only possible when transparency and citizen engagement go hand in hand. We have plenty of sunshine in Florida, so let's keep it that way.

Sincerely,



Jeff Atwater  
Chief Financial Officer  
State of Florida

- [En Español](#)
- [DFS Home](#)
- [Consumer Help Online](#)
- [Email CFO Atwater](#)
- [Press Releases](#)
- [Office of the CFO](#)
- [Unsubscribe](#)

---

## News of Interest

Associated Press: [Florida leads nation in job growth, but jobless rate goes up](#)

Sun Sentinel: [Weston tech firm among Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For](#)

South Florida Business Journal: [Nonprofits pack \\$26 billion economic punch in Florida, new study says](#)

Florida TaxWatch: [Increasing Florida's high-tech footprint beneficial to state economy](#)

Miami Herald: [Alligator hunting has become big business in Florida](#)

---

## Florida's Bottom Line: Read All About It

Learn about Florida's economy from these four experts in the current edition of *Florida's Bottom Line*. CFO Atwater's award-winning quarterly economic magazine is focused on providing you with the latest news and insightful analysis on Florida's financial and economic health.

[Florida's Economic Outlook](#)  
SEE PAGE 1

[Changing Federal Red Tape & Florida](#)  
SEE PAGE 3

[Paving the Path to Florida's Future](#)  
SEE PAGE 5

[Florida's Business Rent Tax](#)  
SEE PAGE 7



Sean Snaith, Ph.D., is the director of the University of Central Florida's Institute for Economic Competitiveness.



Patrick McLaughlin, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Fellow at the Mercatus Center.



Mark Wilson is President and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce.



Dominic Calabro is the President & CEO of Florida TaxWatch.

## Operation S.A.F.E., Be Scam Smart Workshops

Florida Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater invites you to participate in **Operation S.A.F.E., Be Scam Smart**, a free workshop for seniors, their families, and caregivers.

The Florida Department of Financial Services launched Operation S.A.F.E. (Stop Adult Financial Exploitation) as part of CFO Atwater's **On Guard for Seniors** initiative. Be Scam Smart workshops help inform, empower, and protect Florida's seniors from financial scams and fraud. If you want to make sure your savings are protected, register for this workshop and get a better understanding of how scam artists and scams work.

Be Scam Smart by learning more about:

- How to Spot Fraudulent Behavior
- Common Scams that Target Seniors
- How to Fight Identity Theft

Feedback from seniors who attended a Be Scam Smart workshop:

*"Saved every moment of this workshop. The information was needed and vital for seniors' and consumers' financial survival." - West Palm Beach*

*"Presentations were great & well timed. Excellent information we all need to know." - Pensacola*

*"Every senior in the city and state should attend the Be Scam Smart Workshop." - Jacksonville*

*"Thank you for alerting us to the scam we as seniors are exposed to." - Brandon*



Find out more about us in the **About Us** section or **Register** for an upcoming event, including the following workshops:

### **Wednesday, March 29th – Jacksonville**

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Wallace Small Senior Center

1083 Line Street, Jacksonville, FL 32209

[Register](#) | [Directions](#) | [Flyer](#)

### **Wednesday, March 30th – Jacksonville**

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Frances Padgett Arlington Senior Center

Please let us know if you would like to [request a workshop](#) in your area.

---

## Florida Economic Briefs

### **Small business optimism fell in February**

According to a new report by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), small business optimism was down 0.6 percentage points in February. Of the ten components that make up the index, three increased, six decreased, and one remained unchanged.

Source: **National Federation of Independent Business**

### **Florida's unemployment rate rose in January**

Florida's unemployment rate was 5.0 percent in January, up 0.1 percentage point from December (4.9 percent) and unchanged from January of last year (5.0 percent). Florida's unemployment rate for February will be released on March 24.

Source: **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics**

---