

Success Stories for Harvey Bennett

REINFORCING INDUSTRY CONFIDENCE IN THE OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION

Recognized the threat to the Office's reputation from a [critical column](#) published by one of Florida's leading newspapers. Proposed and received approval from the Insurance Commissioner to write a guest column in reply ("[Florida's Homeowners Market is Strong](#)") that used facts to correct the number and frequency of property insurer failures cited in the newspaper's column.

Crafted an adapted column in response to another newspaper's similarly critical editorial. Following publication, received letters of praise from the heads of two major insurance companies in Florida. One cited the Office's column as "One of the best editorial pieces I have ever seen on the subject. On behalf of our more than 100 employees and thousands of stakeholders, thank you for speaking so well to the issues."

The other letter said in part, "It's very encouraging to see a regulator effectively respond to inaccuracies and misconceptions in the media. And, to do so in such a public manner represents bold leadership that is so rare in government officials... You've done this industry and the public we serve a great service."

PREVENTING AN UNFAIR REVIEW OF SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS AND A PROPERTY TAX/SALES TAX SWAP

Developed and executed a series of active and reactive communications strategies to help counter efforts by others to force a review of current state sales tax exemptions that Florida TaxWatch research had shown would be unfair to taxpayers and ineffective in bridging revenue shortfalls.

The effort included research releases, [media releases](#) and news conferences, op-editorials, legislative testimony, and a taxpayer education campaign focusing on a better alternative. Identified the opportunity and created [pitch letters](#) and follow-up phone scripts to offer industry associations contracted research to quantify the economic impact to their sector. The effort culminated with TaxWatch filing a friend-of-the-court brief, which played a role in the Florida Supreme Court striking the measure from the ballot.

This multi-year strategic communications effort resulted in new research revenue and achieved greater member engagement, media mentions, legislative awareness & action, and greater general membership revenue.

COMMUNICATION PLAN ON PROPERTY TAXES RAISES AWARENESS & ACTION FROM BUSINESS COMMUNITY

In response to the escalating increase in local property taxes in 2005-2006, developed a business communication action plan on property taxes that included a survey to TaxWatch members, enhanced release of a research briefing on the scope of the problem, and series of statewide presentations to stakeholder groups and media to solicit support.

At the same time, developed grass-roots support for reform through joint meetings with 18 regional taxpayer groups, providing them specific data, talking points, and delivering effective strategy to assist them in communicating with their constituents, locally-elected officials and hometown media.

The legislature the next year held the line on increases to the Required Local Effort (state-mandated local school property tax) and some local governments at least more openly debated proposed tax increases and some declined passing net tax increases. The effort resulted in new membership revenue as well.

STREAMLINING REGULATION PROJECT HELPS ELIMINATE COSTLY RULES AND BUREAUCRACY

Designed a [research project](#) to streamline Florida's burdensome regulatory process on development. The effort involved organizing a task force that included strategic partner organizations and diverse stakeholders, such as the Florida Homebuilders Association, NAIOP, major land owners, and Florida Audubon. Personally recruited expert and prestigious members that included past secretaries of state departments of Community Affairs, Environmental Protection, and Water Management Districts.

The task force effort produced recommendations that were included in a cooperative report to the legislature that ultimately resulted in the elimination of the Florida Department of Community Affairs, greatly streamlined regulations, and a return to a more home-rule environment on planning and permitting for Florida's 67 counties, which helped accelerate Florida's construction rebound.

SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN RESULTS IN REPEALING FLORIDA'S SUBSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS TAX

Created and helped lead this strategic communications and marketing campaign, including organizing a task force among TaxWatch members and strategic parties, creating a media blitz (that garnered more than a dozen articles in major newspapers pre- and during session), ghost-writing an ["Ideas in Action"](#) TaxWatch publication on behalf of a former Governor, and coordinating efforts with IT Florida and other stakeholder groups.

As a result, many legislators became aware of the gravity of this tax for the first time. The Legislature followed the task force recommendations and eliminated this antiquated tax.

PROVIDING 'PROOF OF PERFORMANCE' GAINS NEW MEMBERS & REINFORCES VALUE TO EXISTING MEMBERS

Revamped TaxWatch marketing materials including one-sheet bulleted takeaways on major research projects of the past, present, and future and targeted-industry "Research That Gets Results" sheets tying TaxWatch efforts with the prospective member's business interests. This became an annual follow-up [Legislative Accomplishments](#) report for current and prospective members and our website.

These targeted marketing materials reinforced confidence and helped increase membership renewal and upgraded dues in existing members and provide the proof of performance to successfully engage and convert prospects to new members.

OTHER WRITING & MARKETING EXAMPLES:

The collage features three distinct pieces of work:

- Sponsored Report:** "Protecting Core Government Services without Raising Taxes" by Dominic Calabro, President of Florida TaxWatch. It discusses a task force's goal to develop billions in cost savings for the state budget.
- Anniversary Message:** "Congratulations to Florida TaxWatch on 30 Years of Building a Better Florida." It lists the Executive Committee members, including Chairman David S. Smith and President John Sawyer.
- Advertorial:** "Florida TaxWatch Advertorial in Florida Trend Magazine, September 2010." It highlights the organization's mission to improve taxpayer value and government accountability.

**Florida TaxWatch
Advertorial in Florida
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[\(click to view\)](#)**

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