

Workforce Florida, Inc.
Larry T. Champion
Interim President

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CONTACT:

Adriane Glenn Grant, Workforce Florida, Inc., 850.921.1122
Gina Welker, Moore Consulting Group, Inc., 850.224.0174

**Florida Efforts Highlighted During U.S. Senate Hearing on Energy
Workforce Issues**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A member of Workforce Florida’s executive leadership team testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources today about Florida’s efforts to ensure the state’s energy industry has the skilled workers needed to meet increasing power demand.

The hearing on whether the nation’s domestic energy industry will have the available workforce—craft and professional—to meet growing energy needs and whether gaps exist that Congress should act to address represents a first on this topic for the panel.

“We have identified energy as a critical sector in our state because of the role this industry plays in keeping our economy strong, and in the event of storm activity, helping us to regain normalcy,” Andra Cornelius, CEcD, Vice President of Business Outreach, told the committee.

Following the series of hurricanes in 2004 and 2005, Florida’s workforce system reached out to state utilities to better understand their workforce challenges. That effort led to the April 2006 formation of the Florida Energy Workforce Consortium (FEWC), whose members include more than 50 representatives from Florida energy companies and associations, the workforce system, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, labor organizations, and the national Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD). All of the state’s investor-owned utilities (IOUs)—Florida Power & Light, Progress Energy, TECO Energy, Gulf Power and Florida Public Utilities Co.—participate in the consortium. Also involved are municipal electric utilities including JEA, the state’s largest, and Orlando Utilities Commission, among others, as well as rural cooperatives like Sumter Electric Cooperative (SECO).

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The consortium's goals are to:

- Identify workforce issues impacting the energy industry, such as critical occupations of concern and the large number of expected retirements.
- Better understand existing training options and output from schools and how companies are transferring knowledge from their existing workers to new ones.
- Begin to develop solutions to meet energy workforce needs, now and in the future.

Florida is recognized in the Southeast and nationally for its energy workforce initiatives such as the consortium as well as its pipeline training programs in high schools and community colleges. The Employ Florida Banner Center for Energy, based at Lake-Sumter Community College, and high school career academies in North, Central and South Florida prepare people for in-demand jobs including line technicians and power plant operators. Florida utilities such as Gulf Power and Florida Power & Light have formed partnerships with educational institutions to train prospective workers.

“The energy industry offers opportunities for high-wage jobs and career advancement in positions that often do not require four-year college degrees,” Ms. Cornelius said. “It’s important that we raise awareness about such opportunities given that many young people don’t go on to college. Not only do these jobs pay well, but high-demand positions such as line technicians are never off-shored.”

By 2011, Florida is on target to become the third most populous state behind California and Texas. By 2020, Florida’s population is expected to top 23.5 million. That growth is fueling plans for new power plants to meet energy demands. At time same time, led by Governor Charlie Crist, diversifying Florida’s energy resources and reducing greenhouse emissions is a top statewide priority. As Florida’s reliance on renewable energy sources increases, another soon-to-launch initiative, the Employ Florida Banner Center for Alternative Energy at the University of Central Florida and the Florida Solar Energy Center, will help ensure our state has enough skilled workers to respond to emergent needs.

From lessons learned in Florida, Workforce Florida’s recommendations for any national policy aimed at addressing the current and future workforce needs of the energy industry are to:

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- Make energy sector workforce development an economic development priority.
- Focus on talent pipeline development and raising awareness about career opportunities in the energy sector.
- Align investments for solutions through partnerships to reduce redundancy and to leverage funding for critical workforce development.

Joining Ms. Cornelius on a panel to discuss energy workforce issues were: Emily DeRocco, Assistant Secretary for the Employment and Training Administration, U. S. Department of Labor; and Patricia A. Hoffman, Deputy Director for Research and Development, Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability, U.S. Department of Energy. Other witnesses scheduled to offer testimony during the two-hour hearing were: Paul Bowers, Southern Company; Carol Berrigan, Nuclear Energy Institute; Norm Szydlowski, Colonial Pipeline; Ray Stults, National Renewable Energy Laboratory; and Jim Hunter, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

“We are honored to have been extended this invitation to share information with our Congressional leaders about Florida’s efforts to respond to this critical need,” said Katherine E. Wilson, Workforce Florida Chairman. “Reliable power is essential for any growing economy and we will continue to develop effective partnerships and policy to ensure Florida utilities have a reliable supply of skilled talent.”

To find out more about the energy sector workforce initiatives under way in Florida, read Ms. Cornelius’ full testimony online at www.WorkforceFlorida.com.

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Workforce Florida, Inc. (WFI) is the state's chief workforce policy organization and principal architect in the efforts to meet the current and future workforce needs and challenges of Florida's businesses and citizens. **WFI** is a state partner, along with the **Agency for Workforce Innovation**, in the **Employ Florida** affiliate network of 24 business-led regional workforce boards and nearly 100 one-stop centers that provide employment solutions throughout Florida. Learn more about Florida’s workforce resources and solutions at EmployFlorida.com.

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