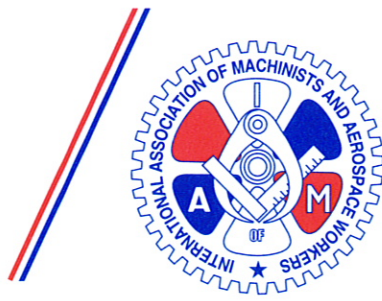


**International
Association of
Machinists and
Aerospace Workers**



9000 Machinists Place
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772-2687

Area Code 301
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August 19, 2008

Office of the
GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT
1111 West Mockingbird Lane, Suite 1357
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(214) 638-6543
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Office of Governor Charlie Crist
State of Florida
PL-05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

We are writing to express our strong concern over an effort by the State of Florida that could result in the unnecessary loss of 1,700 jobs, the evisceration of the local tax base in Hendry County, and a possible hike in food prices -- all of which could be devastating to working men and women already coping with an economic downturn.

As we are all now aware, the State of Florida has indicated its intent to purchase the holdings of U.S. Sugar as part of a laudable Florida Everglades restoration plan – but this plan is rightly stirring controversy, as it clearly could have devastating consequences for families across the region. Their voices deserve to be heard, and the impact on their quality of life must be taken into account as this policy takes shape.

While we applaud your concern for the environment generally and for the ecological importance of the Everglades specifically, we have always believed that environmental concerns are fully compatible with jobs and a vibrant economy. We hope that the people's governor is ready to help reconcile these two worthy goals – but always putting people first.

Clewiston is without argument an irreplaceable part of Florida's economic and cultural fabric. Like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting, it's a town of 6,500 working families supported mostly by the sugar industry. Besides being the largest employer, U.S. Sugar has been, according to the Miami Herald "a generous partner ... donating land for libraries and other buildings and providing college scholarships for employee's offspring."

Our concern is that the purchase of U.S. Sugar and the resulting evisceration of the industry and its economic base in Clewiston represents an extreme "slash and burn" position. The objective of Everglades' restoration, we believe, can be accomplished without sacrificing jobs and the lifeblood of a local economy already straining under high food and gas prices.

Of course, the potential sale of USS to the state could have far reaching indirect economic effects as well. The IAM represents thousands of retirees in an area whose pensions rely on a healthy sugar industry. At the end of the day, the wholesale purchase of USS by the state could wreak economic havoc of unforeseen proportions if all the sugar mills are not kept active long term keeping strong jobs and an energetic economy in the community and across South Florida.

We therefore request a meeting with you to discuss various alternatives to meeting both the needs of Florida's working families and our common environmental goals as well as your position with regard to keeping all the sugar mills open for the long term.

We of course are prepared to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Martinez, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Robert Martinez, Jr.
GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT