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Florida League of Cities joins Graham and Frey in support for civics education

Florida League of Cities makes \$25,000 donation to Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

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ORLANDO – The Florida League of Cities joined with former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham and former Congressman Lou Frey today to deliver a significant donation to promote civics education in Florida schools and communities.

Wellington Vice-Mayor and Florida League President Carmine Priore, who has made support for civics education one of his top priorities as League President, delivered a donation of \$25,000 to the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship. The Center, charged with strengthening civic education in Florida, is a joint partnership between the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida and the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida.

“Our founding fathers believed that the study and understanding of our government should be at the core of every American’s education,” Priore said. “A better-informed citizenry would promote civility and ethics in government, and hold leaders accountable to produce better governance. As city leaders, it is our responsibility to support this effort.”

Priore described his push for civics education as vitally needed to combat a lack of basic knowledge about this nation’s political values and history that threatens the democratic foundation of government. For example:

- Recent polls show that 40 percent of Florida adults cannot explain the separation of powers or name the three branches of government, and 67 percent of Americans cannot name one of their U.S. senators.
- In a survey of High School students by the Knight Foundation, half of students believed the government could censor the Internet, and more than a third think the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.

“We must return the teaching of civics to our public schools and train students to be active participants in our political process,” Senator Graham said. “With the leadership of the League and President Carmine Priore, we will encourage a return to the American tradition that learning the skills of citizenship is at the core of education and that core should prepare our young citizens to be participants in the governments which will most affect their lives: cities and towns, counties and district school boards.”

(MORE)

President Carmine Priore, Vice Mayor, Wellington

First Vice President John Marks, Mayor, Tallahassee ♦ Second Vice President Joy F. Cooper, Mayor, Hallandale Beach

Executive Director Michael Sittig ♦ General Counsel Harry Morrison, Jr.

The grant from the League of Cities will pay to support teacher training, the development of learning materials on local government, and direct involvement of students in local civic affairs through mentor ships, internships and other hands on experiences.

“We are excited about the opportunity to partner with President Priore and the Florida League of Cities in this important effort,” Congressman Frey said. “Local public officials are a vast reservoir of knowledge about how things actually work in Florida. Connecting them with our schools will help students develop the skills that they need to have a real impact in their communities.”

The Florida League of Cities’ contribution to the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship is only one part of Priore’s program to encourage civic education during his tenure as League President. League of Cities will make civics resources and materials available to teachers, community leaders and civic groups, and it will help cities work with citizens to promote public engagement and civility, to improve ethics awareness and compliance among local officials, and to develop city-specific civics materials to share in local communities.

“James Madison wrote that ‘Knowledge will forever govern ignorance,’ and that the American people must arm themselves with knowledge in order to act as their own governors,” Priore said. “As we educate all generations of Americans, we must ensure the preservation of our republic with that same fervor for knowledge that was passed down to us from the first generation of Americans.”

Examples of civics activities that will result from the League of Cities’ initiative include:

- City-sponsored open houses and tours of municipal facilities;
- On-line public resources for use in classrooms, civic clubs and other organizations;
- Advisory boards that provide citizen input to City Councils;
- Citizen Academies that educate about city government and services; and
- Youth Councils that engage young people and seek “youth voices” on city issues.

“City officials and employees must agree to be civics teachers in classrooms, in city halls and in our communities,” Priore said. “We will all benefit if more citizens understand what services cities provide, how we pay for those services, and how all citizens can make a difference in their city’s quality of life.”

The Florida League of Cities, Inc. is the official organization of the municipal governments (cities, towns, villages and chartered counties) in Florida, designed and established to meet and serve the needs of Florida’s municipal officials.

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