



FLORIDA CENTER FOR FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

**For Immediate Release
September 10, 2009**

**Contact: Alan Stonecipher
(850) 325-6480/
510-0954**

3.6 Million Floridians Lack Health Coverage, Census Says

Economic Pain Highlights Need for Healthcare Reform

TALLAHASSEE—One in five Floridians, or more than 3.6 million people, lacked health coverage in 2008 as poverty increased in the state and median income fell, according to Census Bureau data released today.

Florida ranks as the third-worst state in the nation in health coverage. Only Texas and New Mexico recorded higher uninsured percentages than Florida's three-year average of 20.5 percent. Florida's total of 3.6 million people uninsured is surpassed by only California and Texas.

"Far too many Floridians lack adequate health coverage and even more are at risk of losing coverage because of the weakness of the economy," said John Hall, executive director of the Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy (FCFEP). Hall said the number of uninsured Floridians is almost certainly higher than 3.6 million now because of rising unemployment since last year.

"We can't afford to wait any longer to achieve universal health coverage and improve the current system that leaves so many of our neighbors without adequate healthcare," he said.

The FCFEP analysis of the Census Bureau's 2009 Current Population Survey data also shows that:

--The percentage of Floridians below the federal poverty level increased to 13.1 percent in 2008 from 12.5 percent in 2007 and 11.5 percent in 2006.

--Median household income in Florida dropped almost four percent in the 2007-08 period compared to the 2005-06 average, from \$48,095 to \$46,206. (The Census Bureau uses multiyear averages to increase the statistical reliability of its data.)

National data fixes the number of uninsured throughout the U.S. at 46.3 million, up from 45.7 million in 2007. The national uninsured rate is 15.4 percent.

“Wise choices to improve Florida’s economy, investments in safety-net programs and helping business create jobs that will lift people out of poverty are critical actions Florida must begin now,” Hall said.

FCFEP will provide more detailed analysis of Floridians’ status regarding health insurance, poverty, and family income on September 22, when the Census Bureau releases additional data.

###