February 26, 2014

The Honorable Rick Scott
Office of Governor, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Eliminate government waste at Enterprise Florida, investigation needed

Governor Scott,

We respectfully encourage you to have your Chief Inspector General, Melinda Miguel, conduct an investigation and publish a report examining the lavish travel and wasteful government purchasing practices by Enterprise Florida to ensure the agency is held to the highest standards of accountability and transparency. The excessive spending by Enterprise Florida, a taxpayer supported entity serving as the privatized commerce department for the State of Florida, was detailed in a February 24, WPEC/CBS 12 investigative report by Michael Buczyner. The Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is responsible for the state’s contract with Enterprise Florida, but it has clearly turned a blind eye to this waste and abuse of the taxpayers’ money.

Enterprise Florida travel guidelines do not comply with official state travel restrictions, even though the entity is using taxpayer funds allocated by the state legislature. According to an internal audit prepared on March 15, 2012 by McGladrey, only three Enterprise Florida executives, Secretary of Commerce Gray Swoope, Chief Operating Officer Griff Salmon and Chief Marketing Officer Melissa Medley, all former employees of the Mississippi Development Authority, gained “unlimited signing authority” on February 7, 2012, to execute contracts and make significant purchases of non-economic development goods and services. Since the new authority was granted to these top three executives at Enterprise Florida, here is a sampling of the organization’s questionable expenses:

- Nearly $22,000 spent on New York Yankee Luxury Suites and related purchases.
- More than $13,000 spent at the San Diego Zoo.
- $12,000 spent on Texas Rangers baseball.
- More than $7,000 spent at Cowboys Stadium.
- More than $4,000 spent on Atlanta Braves baseball.
- More than $4,000 spent on limousine services.
- Nearly $3,300 spent at Truluck’s Seafood Steak & Crab House in Austin, Texas.
- More than $2,500 spent at the 21 Club.
- More than $2,000 spent at 4Rivers Smokehouse.
- More than $1,300 spent on a charter fishing boat.
- Roughly another $30,000 per month spent on American Express credit cards for unknown expenditures.
- Thousands more on airfare, luxury resorts and hotels, expensive meals and limousine services.

The people of Florida deserve accountability and transparency within every aspect of our government. Given the appearance of impropriety, an inspector general report is needed to allow you to assess whether the taxpayer resources that support Enterprise Florida are properly protected and whether corrective action is needed. A company this large, supported by hard-working Florida families, must be held to the highest ethical standards. Integrity Florida has posted related public records online at www.integrityflorida.org/EFIwastefulspending.

Sincerely,

Dan Krassner, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Integrity Florida

Cc: Senate President Don Gaetz, House Speaker Will Weatherford, Senator Andy Gardiner, Representative Ed Hooper, Chief Inspector General Melinda Miguel, Secretary of Commerce Gray Swoope, DEO Executive Director Jesse Panuccio

*Integrity Florida is a nonpartisan research institute and government watchdog whose mission is to promote integrity in government and expose public corruption.*