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Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater Announces 2012 Small Business Leadership Forum and Keynote Speaker

TALLAHASSEE—Florida Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater today announced he will host the 2012 Small Business Leadership Forum, in partnership with The Jim Moran Institute, in Tampa on Sept. 6-7, 2012, at the Westin Harbour Island Hotel. CFO Atwater and The Jim Moran Institute's goal for the forum is to bring together business leaders, investors, and academic and industry experts to share best practices, resources and opportunities for strategically moving small businesses toward long-term prosperity and positively impacting their bottom lines.

“Diversifying our economy is necessary for long-term prosperity. It is equally vital that the backbone of our economy—2.2 million small businesses in our state—continue to grow, prosper and remain in Florida,” CFO Atwater said. “While we continue to see positive trends in business and employment growth, I know we can do more to assist small businesses already established in our state. The forum aims to connect business owners with the right tools and information to help them succeed during Florida's economic recovery.”

“We are excited about the partnership with CFO Atwater in hosting the forum, which helps foster our commitment to entrepreneurship and provides small businesses with the tools and expertise needed to pursue opportunities and sustain advantages in today's competitive market. Community outreach efforts like the forum are a means for The Jim Moran Institute to provide privately funded resources for social good and help to improve the economic future for small businesses in Florida,” said Randy Blass, director of The Jim Moran Institute.

The mission of The Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship at Florida State University is to cultivate, train and inspire entrepreneurial leaders in the community through education programs and curriculum, intensive consulting assistance and mentorship to entrepreneurs and business owners. Through degree and certificate programs in entrepreneurship, outreach programs in Florida, and complementary activities such as speakers and workshops, The Jim Moran Institute currently serves 2,000 business and non-business majors on campus and more than 200 businesses in the community each year.

The Small Business Leadership Forum will feature entrepreneur, digital expert and author Gary Vaynerchuk as the keynote speaker. Vaynerchuk's business success and passion for digital integration set him apart from other entrepreneurs and brings a unique perspective to the forum. From 1997 to 2005, he grew his family business from \$3 million to \$45 million by recognizing the benefits of e-commerce. He further grew his small business through the web and social media, and in 2009, launched VaynerMedia, an agency that helps Fortune 500 companies find their social media footing and build their digital brand.

In addition to Vaynerchuk's keynote address, the forum will cover key topics and panel discussions including short- and long-term forecasts and trends of Florida's economy with a special focus on small business; ideas for attracting and creating an environment for investment,

including improving access to capital; and ways to leverage resources and programs available through our public universities and Small Business Development Centers. Participants will also have the opportunity to attend practitioner workshops taught by issue experts covering a wide range of topics, including marketing small business, dashboard management and employee training.

Florida's small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Approximately 2.2 million small businesses, making up nearly 90 percent of employers, employ 6.85 million Floridians.

For more information and to reserve a spot at the forum, please visit www.FLSmallBusinessForum.com. Register by July 1 to receive the discounted early bird registration.

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Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, a statewide elected official and officer of the Florida Cabinet, oversees the Department of Financial Services. CFO Atwater's priorities include fighting financial fraud, abuse and waste in government, reducing government spending and regulatory burdens that chase away capital, and ensuring transparency and accountability in spending.