



Subliminal message no help in Enterprise Florida fight

Joe Henderson

February 17, 2017

I was watching the fascinating video from the Florida House of Representatives in its escalating war with Gov. **Rick Scott** over state subsidies for private businesses and tourism when an image caught my eye as it streaked by quickly.

It was the logo for Enterprise Florida, the public-private partnership that is supposed to create jobs. Scott loves the concept so much he included \$85 million in his budget request for the endeavor. Therein lies the battle line with House Speaker **Richard Corcoran**, who says it's a waste of taxpayer money.

The House video makes that case emphatically.

Anyway, I rolled the video back to the logo and thought, hey, wait a minute. It looked familiar. One quick Google search later confirmed that EP's logo looks suspiciously similar to Enron's, and, well, need I say more?

That's not a subliminal message an endeavor fighting for its life (and funding) wants to send.

Enron, as we remember, set the gold standard (so to speak) for getting into taxpayers' wallets in the name of "job creation" and other such gibberish. The Libertarian-leaning Cato Institute in 2012 called Enron "a poster child for the harm of business subsidies," reporting the company received \$3.7 billion through various means through federal government agencies before it collapsed in December 2001.

No one is trying to place Enterprise Florida on the same level as Enron, but the principle Corcoran and his GOP-controlled House members believe is where the connection is valid. Corcoran strongly argues that government (meaning taxpayers) shouldn't decide business winners and loser by funneling public money to private interests.

And EP certainly has received more than a little bit of public dough since it was founded in 2005. As the Orlando Sentinel reported in December, "A prime example of Florida's political favoritism is Enterprise Florida, a public-private partnership that promised to create 200,000 jobs by 2005. After \$1.7 billion in incentives, it had reached only half its goal. And while the program

was intended to be funded equally between public and private funds, an estimated 90 percent of its funding came from the taxpayers.”

Scott is on a public relations offensive to keep the public tap open for Enterprise Florida, since job creation seems to be the sole focus of his administration. He was just in Palm Beach, warning that cutbacks to EP and Visit Florida, the tourism arm that also receives generous taxpayer money, could result in job losses.

WPTV in West Palm Beach reported that Discover the Palm Beaches President and CEO Jorge Pesquera said that eliminating Visit Florida could result in the loss of 3 million tourists to his area. He said that could cause 10 hotels to close with a loss of 31,000 jobs.

Well ...

All that taxpayer money didn't save Enron jobs, did it?

To be fair, it makes sense for the state to market tourism, given its obvious huge impact. But Enterprise Florida is another matter, and the showdown between a governor hungry to create jobs and a House Speaker equally determined to protect the public purse is in full swing.

While that plays out, the folks at Enterprise Florida might want to commission someone to create a new logo. It's just a thought.