

Orlando Sentinel

Economy dominates town-hall meeting with Crist

Jeannette Rivera-Lyles | Orlando Sentinel Staff Writer
January 27, 2009

KISSIMMEE - Florida [Gov. Charlie Crist](#) said Monday he'll work with the administration of [President Barack Obama](#) to move the state's and the country's economy forward.

"My guy didn't win," said Crist, a Republican. "But that's democracy and that's fair. But the guy that is there is my guy now. I hope and pray for his success because we're all in this together."

Crist's comments were made at a town-hall meeting at the Osceola campus of [Valencia Community College](#). About 150 residents and several elected officials packed the small auditorium.

The governor fielded questions about health care, growth and unfunded mandates, but the economy was the recurring theme through the one-hour chat.

"What is the state planning to do to lower foreclosure rates?" asked Jerricka Gunther, a Poinciana resident who was laid off after 10 years as a real-estate agent.

Crist said his administration was "encouraging banks in Florida to start lending again," which in turn would stimulate job creation so that "people can keep their homes." The governor added that he is looking into ideas "that can be turned into law" to curb the problem. He didn't offer any specifics but encouraged the audience to share their ideas with their legislators.

Prompted by a question from Osceola County Commissioner Ken Smith, Crist said Central Florida's commuter-rail project was at the top of his priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

"We're on board and excited about it," Crist said. "We think it'll be great for the economy, the environment, job creation and growth."

Commuter rail's opponents argue that, given the ailing economy, Florida should not be spending money on new projects.