

9/26/17

GOOD MORNING, ALL. THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME HERE TODAY IN OUR CAPITOL, THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO ALL FLORIDIANS. I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO BE HERE AS A SON OF FLORIDA'S SOIL, HAVING ROOTS THAT STRETCH FROM TAMPA TO TALLAHASSEE. I AM ALSO HUMBLLED TO BE REPRESENTING THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AS ITS 115<sup>TH</sup> ELECTED AND CONSECRATED BISHOP. OUR THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION AND RECONCILIATION WAS BORN MORE THAN 200 YEARS AGO IN PHILADELPHIA BY OUR FOUNDER AND FIRST ELECTED AND CONSECRATED BISHOP, RICHARD ALLEN. OUR CONGREGATIONS NOW SPAN THE GLOBE FROM INDIA TO AFRICA TO EUROPE, NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA, AND ASIA. THE AME CHURCH BROUGHT ITS MINISTRY AND MISSION TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA IN 1880. WE NOW HAVE CONGREGATIONS IN EVERY COUNTY. I AM PLEASED TO BE JOINED TODAY BY SOME OF OUR PASTORS AND MINISTERS FROM ACROSS THIS STATE. WE ALSO NUMBER AMONG OUR MEMBERSHIP SOME VERY FAMILIAR NAMES IN PUBLIC SERVICE: THE HONORABLE ARTHENIA JOYNER, FORMER FLORIDA SENATE MINORITY LEADER; THE HONORABLE KAMIA BROWN, FLORIDA STATE REPRESENTATIVE; THE HONORABLE AUDREY GIBSON, FLORIDA STATE SENATOR; AND THE HONORABLE JIMMY WILLIAMS, HOMESTEAD CITY COMMISSIONER.

FOR MANY YEARS, FLORIDA HAS BENEFITTED FROM ADVOCATES WHO HAVE STRUGGLED MIGHTILY TO STEM THE TIDE OF HEARTBREAK, DESPAIR, AND HOPELESSNESS CAUSED BY THE UNFETTERED ABILITY OF PAYDAY LENDERS IN FLORIDA TO PLY THEIR TRADE. BECAUSE THE PAYDAY LENDING INDUSTRY HAS INVESTED SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES TO MINIMIZE THEIR REGULATION BY LEGISLATION. THE INTEREST RATES REMAIN AT USURIOUS LEVELS AVERAGING OVER 300%. EXTREME FINANCIAL HARM IS BEING DONE TO FLORIDA FAMILIES BY LOANS THAT TRAP THEM IN LONG-TERM DEBT. THE ABUSES ARE OFTEN UNDISCOVERED, UNDETECTED, AND/OR UNDISCLOSED UNTIL THE DAMAGE TO CONSUMERS IS IRREPARABLE. EVERY OTHER ENTITY DOING MONEY-LENDING BUSINESS IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA IS SUBJECT TO GREATER RESTRAINTS. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS LONG PAST THE TIME FOR THE PAYDAY LENDING INDUSTRY TO JOIN THEM.

AFTER MUCH DISCUSSION, MEDITATION, AND PRAYER, THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) CHURCH IN FLORIDA HAS DECIDED TO INCREASE ITS ONGOING EFFORTS TO END PAYDAY LENDING ABUSES IN FLORIDA. THE FIVE ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF THE AME CHURCH IN THS STATE HAVE DETERMINED THAT WE MUST BECOME MORE PROACTIVE IN STOPPING THIS ECONOMIC ASSAULT ON POOR PEOPLE BY THE PAYDAY LENDING INDUSTRY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY NECESSARY IN THE ABSENCE TO DATE OF ANY MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US FROM PREDATORY PAYDAY LENDING PRACTICES.

TO THIS END WE HAVE FILED PUBLIC PROPOSAL # \_\_\_\_\_ WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMISSION CALLING FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT FOR THE UPCOMING 2018 NOVEMBER ELECTIONS THAT WILL CAP THE ANNUAL INTEREST RATE THAT ANY LENDER IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA CAN CHARGE AT 30%. WE NOTE THAT MANY STATES OUTLAW PAYDAY LENDING OUTRIGHT. MANY OTHERS ALLOW IT ONLY WITH RATE CAPS FAR LOWER THAN THE SO-CALLED CAPS NOW ALLOWED UNDER FLORIDA LAW. INDEED UNDER FLORIDA LAW SUCH A RATE CAP AS WE WILL PROPOSE IS ALREADY IN PLACE FOR AUTOMOBILE TITLE LOANS AND CONSUMER FINANCE LOANS.

WE ARE HUMBLLED TO SEE THAT WE WILL BE JOINED IN THIS MOVEMENT TO ACTION BY MANY OTHER FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. TOGETHER, AS PARTNERS, WE WILL PROVIDE EACH OTHER WITH MUTUAL INPUT, SHARE RESOURCES, ENGAGE OTHER SUPPORTERS, AND DETERMINE EFFECTIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGY FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PERNICIOUS EVIL OF PAYDAY LENDING ABUSE, WHICH IMPACTS ALL OF US TO SOME DEGREE OR ANOTHER.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS US ALL IS MY PRAYER.

WE WILL ALL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE AT THIS TIME.