

## Gubernatorial Candidates McCollum, Scott, and Sink Talk of Transportation Plans

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Friday, August 6, 2010 at 11:59 p.m.

ORLANDO | Republican gubernatorial candidates Bill McCollum and Rick Scott addressed a convention of state highway builders Friday - but only one of them talked at length about transportation.

McCollum, the state's attorney general, and Democratic candidate Alex Sink, the state's chief financial officer, told the Florida Transportation Builders' Association the state needs to be ready when the Panama Canal widening project is finished in a few years.

That will open up new Asian markets for Florida businesses, creating jobs.

"We need to be prepared for highways and for the interconnection with the airports as necessary," McCollum said.

Scott never specifically addressed transportation issues until asked by an audience member after his speech.

Scott said transportation is a part of an infrastructure system including schools and health care that attracts new businesses to a state.

During his talk, he portrayed himself as a Midwesterner, the son of a truck driver, who worked as a paper boy, fry cook and phone booth cleaner before getting into business and building the Columbia/HCA hospital chain.

He told the group he would bring that acumen to Tallahassee.

"My business background, 100 percent, is how do you build private sector jobs," he said. "That's all I've done."

McCollum has criticized Scott's business background.

Scott was forced out by the Columbia/HCA board in 1997 amid a Medicaid/Medicare fraud investigation, receiving a severance package worth millions in cash and stock.

Scott, who was not charged, has said he didn't know about any wrongdoing.

The firm paid \$1.7 billion in fines and settlements.

The winner of the Scott/McCollum primary Aug. 24 will face Sink in the November general election.

Sink presented a plan that would protect transportation funds from legislators who want them for other projects.

It also stresses high-speed rail, commuter rail and improved bike and pedestrian transportation, and seaports, airports and the aerospace industry.

"One of the quickest ways that we have to get Floridians back to work in a very meaningful way and not be wasting money is to invest in transportation," she said.

"The money that is spent, whether it is federal money or state money, provides something for the future," Sink said.

"We're investing in roads for the future, things that 20 years down the road we can say that was started in the hard times, but look at what we have to show for it," she said.

Sink has no primary opposition.