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DEDICATION
LAWTON CHILES
FLORIDA'S GOVERNOR, 1991-1998

THE HONORABLE BUDDY MACKAY
FORMER GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA

Like everyone else in Florida, I was shocked when I learned of the death of Governor Lawton Chiles. Now a few months later, while the shock has diminished—our sadness has not.

It was such a great personal privilege to be Governor Chiles' partner during the triumphant final miles of his leadership. He was my friend, mentor and teacher. Like many of you—and millions of our fellow citizens—I loved him. Our state has suffered a terrible loss. Still, his was a life well-lived and his legacy lives on. That's something we can celebrate.

He began his career in public service with a commitment to make a difference. In 1970, he took his passion for Florida on the road for a 1003 mile walk across the state and into the hearts of Floridians. He won a U.S. Senate seat and used his power to change lives—literally. He chaired the U.S. Commission on Infant Mortality, and he became chairman of the Budget Committee, where he began the hard work of balancing our budget so that our children do not inherit the debt of this generation.

Lawton had always wanted to be a U.S. Senator, but it was when he came home to Florida that he found the best job he ever had. He loved being Governor. And it was as Governor that he realized the answers to our problems—crime, unemployment, teen pregnancy, and high medical costs—lie with our children. He knew if the state focused its efforts on raising healthy, safe, and well-educated children that our future would be secure.

His focus on children was representative of Lawton's philosophy. He was not about yesterday: he was about tomorrow. He did not spend a lot of time looking over his shoulder because there was too much in front of him yet to do. He was a true visionary.

We can cherish our memories of Governor Chiles, but we can best honor his work by continuing to look forward, as he did. Even as his second term was nearing the end, Lawton was thinking—and writing—about Florida's future.

Governor Chiles felt strongly that lawmakers need to focus on replacing a shortsighted "crisis management" mindset with long-term vision that focuses on preventing problems before they become too big and too expensive to handle. It's easy to get lawmakers to deal with a crisis when it is visible to everyone and the public demands a solution to the problem. But it is much harder to get budgetary support and legislative action for problems that require prevention. Getting the Legislature to prevent problems instead of solving crises, Lawton believed, would be a great test for Florida.

We made progress in the last few years in recognizing that the best answers do not come from Tallahassee or Washington; they come from our communities. Governor Chiles was adamant that we need to recognize that our citizens are in the driver's seat and that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions to Florida's problems. That's why the state needs to be a partner in local efforts, not a master.

Lawton grew up in a very different Florida, but he believed that today's Florida is more exciting and more diverse than it has ever been. He felt Florida was poised to lead in the next millennium with all of its people at the table. But to be true leaders, we must first nurture and protect our children. We must restore a sense of community to our inner cities and protect rural Florida from overdevelopment. And we must preserve our natural environment.

That was Lawton Chiles' vision, and while no one will ever fill his shoes, we can all follow his path to the future.