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## **Statewide Business, Consumer and Conservation Groups Committed to Making a Stronger Safer Florida**

*~Coalition Launches to Support Needed Reform of Citizens and the Cat Fund~*

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – A collection of statewide business, consumer and conservation groups today announced the formation of the Stronger Safer Florida coalition. The nonpartisan coalition is comprised of a wide range of groups, and has formed in an effort to support state legislation that will reform Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund. The diverse membership reflects broad support for changes to the state-run insurance entities, which reports indicate do not insure the majority of Floridians, but due to their statutory power to levy assessments do tax them all in event of a major hurricane catastrophe.

For years, many of these groups have called on the Florida Legislature to make needed changes to Citizens and the Cat Fund in order to return Florida's property insurance market back to a healthy state. Additionally, members of the Stronger Safer Florida coalition believe reform of Citizens and the Cat Fund are critical to better protecting all Floridians including consumers, businesses, charitable organizations, religious institutions and local government entities, as well as shielding environmentally sensitive areas throughout the state.

"We are pleased to join together with the other groups of Stronger Safer Florida in an effort to better protect our members and the interests of all Floridians," said Thomas C. Feeney, III, President and Chief Executive Officer, Associated Industries of Florida. "When the Florida Legislature convenes next week for the 2013 state legislative session, it is imperative our elected leaders recognize the importance of implementing necessary and needed changes to Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund. Both of these underfunded state-backed programs place an unreasonable financial burden on the backs of the majority of Floridians, and there is no better time, or greater need, for reform than now."

Today, the Stronger Safer Florida Coalition consists of 14 member and allied organizations, including Associated Industries of Florida, Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Consumer Action Network, Florida TaxWatch, the R Street Institute, 1,000 Friends of Florida, Audubon of Florida, CERES, Florida Coastal and Oceans Coalition, Florida Wildlife Federation, Sea Turtle Conservancy, Surfrider Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and James Madison Institute. Additionally, there are various field experts who also support the coalition's efforts.

A number of these groups have been instrumental in pre-legislative session meetings, providing requested input to leadership of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee and by testifying at meetings. In addition, these groups are constantly working to educate the general public about the problems related to the structure of the current system.

“Without the appropriate changes to Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund, Florida consumers and the financial security of our state are at risk,” said Bill Newton, Executive Director, Florida Consumer Action Network. “We appreciate the opportunity to be part of Stronger Safer Florida as this coalition provides our organization with another platform to share our position on responsibly spreading hurricane risk outside of the state, the importance of mitigation and the need to pass thoughtful legislation that has a minimal impact on rates.”

In the coming weeks, the Stronger Safer Florida Coalition will be launching an informative website with background information on the need for property insurance reform in the State of Florida. The group encourages the 77 percent of Floridians who are not insured by Citizens to join them in their efforts this upcoming legislative session.

“For years the Florida Wildlife Federation has supported reform of Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund,” said Manley Fuller, President, Florida Wildlife Federation. “On behalf of our members as well as the many conservation groups that support Stronger Safer Florida, we believe this nonpartisan coalition is representative of the majority of Floridians and hope the majority will consider assisting us in our efforts. Not only will returning Citizens back to the insurer of last resort and ‘right-sizing’ the Cat Fund better protect all Floridians from a potential financial nightmare, but these changes will positively impact Florida’s environment by better protecting our hurricane-prone state’s undeveloped barrier islands and wetlands that offer important environmental benefits and weather related safeguards.”

If you are interested in receiving further information or would like to be added to our mailing list, please email [strongersaferflorida@gmail.com](mailto:strongersaferflorida@gmail.com).

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