

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Media Contact:**

[media@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:media@myfloridahouse.gov)

(850) 717-5780

### **Speaker Chris Sprowls' Opening Remarks for the 2022 Legislative Session**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (January 11, 2022)** — Today, Speaker of the Florida House Chris Sprowls, R-Palm Harbor, marked the start of the 2022 Regular Session with the following opening day speech. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

*What are you willing to risk? That question lies at the heart of what we will do here in Session for the next 60 days.*

*When we legislate, we manage risk. We assess the danger of inaction. When we do act, we face the problem of unintended or collateral consequences. But the choices we make are also the opportunities we lose, because we spend resources on this problem versus that one. Though we rarely talk about it, the foundational question is whether our idea will even work.*

*We often debate in this chamber and in committee encased in the armor of our own certainty — except the real world is anything but certain. There have been bills passed by this majority that have not delivered on the promises made on this Floor. And there have been many times that members of the minority party have predicted an apocalypse that has not materialized.*

*When we pass a major piece of policy out of the Legislature, we are deciding, we are answering the question, "What are we willing to risk to improve the lives of the people of Florida?"*

*But, we can't avoid the obvious irony. If governance rests on the assessment and balancing of risks, it also happens inside the political process, which is almost entirely built around the concept of risk avoidance.*

*Politics encourages us to talk big and act small. It pushes us inside our comfort zones and builds walls to keep us from noticing that the world around us has changed. It asks the converted to preach only to the faithful.*

*You don't have to look much further than the conversations around COVID-19. Here's an almost perfect example of the need to manage risks — to balance public health concerns against the need for people to maintain their livelihoods and the need to attend to the emotional, educational and social well-being of our children. And yet, the conversation has, at times, been dominated by extremes — the people who want to lock everyone inside at home and the people who think the virus is a conspiracy to microchip the masses.*

*The truth is that public health officials aren't saints, and they aren't sinners. They are just ordinary government bureaucrats who see the world myopically through the lens of their own work. They are no different than the insurance industry lobbyists, the nursing home owners, the criminal justice reform advocates or any of the hundreds of others who will come to Tallahassee this Session. They spend their days looking through a narrow keyhole, and they see the world in monochrome.*

*It's our job as legislators to see the entire horizon, the full spectrum. It's our responsibility to appreciate the complexities and balance perspectives, to see both the risks and the opportunities presented in every issue, and to find a right path forward.*

*I've been incredibly proud of the work this Florida House has done over the last year, and I think it stands in sharp contrast to the paralytic dysfunction and extreme self-regard that has ruined Washington, D.C.*

*But our work isn't done.*

*This Session, in this House, we are going to be looking at the risk portfolio of our state. Some risks are concrete and specific, like the deficiencies in our state's cybersecurity infrastructure. Some risks are massive and omnipresent, like the array of problems created by the threat of hurricanes. Some risks are more existential, like what our shared values and beliefs are as Floridians.*

*We are at a cash-rich moment in our state's history, which means we have a historic opportunity to make critical investments in long-term needs, but also a historic opportunity to waste money on short-term wants.*

*Whatever the issue, my only ask of all of you is this: Step away from the keyhole and out of your comfort zones. Be a little less certain that you have all the answers and a little more skeptical about what advocates and lobbyists are telling you. Listen carefully before you talk, and then, ask hard, informed questions. Engage. Take chances. Don't be afraid of hard choices.*

*Members, if we do all of that, the rewards can be life changing. We have the power to make this state a better, safer, more prosperous place for all Floridians. The only question that remains is, to make that happen, what are you willing to risk?*

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