



**STATE ISSUE: INSURANCE REFORM**

**POSITION:** FNGLA supports a comprehensive approach to insurance reform for small businesses to provide practical options for health care, workers' compensation, and property/casualty insurance. These programs must include specific criteria and meaningful reforms which bring down the cost of premiums and expand availability of affordable coverage.

**BACKGROUND:** Florida has reached an insurance crossroads. The state's insurer of last resort is running a bankrupt system. Some argue the system needs more money and specific rules to require insurance companies operating in Florida to offer property insurance. Others believe Florida's significant regulatory hurdles effectively hinder new companies from coming to Florida.

Florida's agricultural businesses such as nursery and landscape firms have an even more difficult hurdle to leap. In many cases, insurance companies simply do not provide any coverage whatsoever -- no options, and no premiums to increase. Insurance companies simply refuse to carry property/casualty lines in Florida for greenhouses and shade houses. FNGLA believes the government's role is not to force or regulate companies to carry policies which do not make actuarial sense, however FNGLA would welcome opportunities to meet with insurance companies to develop minimum insurable standards. FNGLA also encourages our federal and state leaders to identify and adopt incentives for insurance companies to conduct business in Florida.

The insurance issue is not limited to property/casualty insurance policies. In fact, small business owners face tremendous challenges in finding companies to carry affordable health insurance, as well as workers' compensation insurance. While each of these issues is technically different, the principle remains constant. Our elected officials must find solutions which allow reasonable options for all insurance to Florida's small businesses and family farms.

Insurance is a privilege. Insurance should not be designed to help an employer make pay-roll checks or keep their business running. Yet, businesses and growers are being asked to bear an increasingly significant portion of the state's insurance burden. In many cases, many nursery, landscape and retail businesses do not have the option, opportunity, or access to affordable health, property/casualty or worker's compensation insurance.

FNGLA members are all too familiar with rising health care insurance costs, the loss of their property insurance policies. Following the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, many FNGLA members were greeted with the outright cancellation of their property insurance or the wind damage portion of their policies. To add insult to injury, most insurance companies refuse to carry a structural insurance policy for nursery growers regardless of the construction criteria and wind load resistance.