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# The Miami Herald

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**LEGISLATURE 2011**

## After secret talks, a deal on spending

■ Working behind closed doors, House Speaker Dean Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos worked out a budget agreement.

**BY MARC CAPUTO**  
 Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — After secret talks and public acrimony, the Florida Legislature's Republican leaders announced they reached a budget deal Tuesday, sparing them the embarrassment of an overtime lawmaking session.

The deal, concerning how the bottom-line sections of the budget will shake out, still means cuts for education, healthcare, transportation, the criminal-justice system and state-worker pay and cost-of-living increases for their retirement accounts.

Also, the agreement probably means that Gov. Rick Scott won't get the big corporate-income and property-tax cuts he sought in his proposed budget. He wanted

• TURN TO BUDGET, 2A

**THE AMERICAS**

## For Cuba firms, it's the friends and family plan

■ The Cuban government's massive economic overhaul is hinged on taxes and access to capital. For now, businesses need to find money in more informal ways.

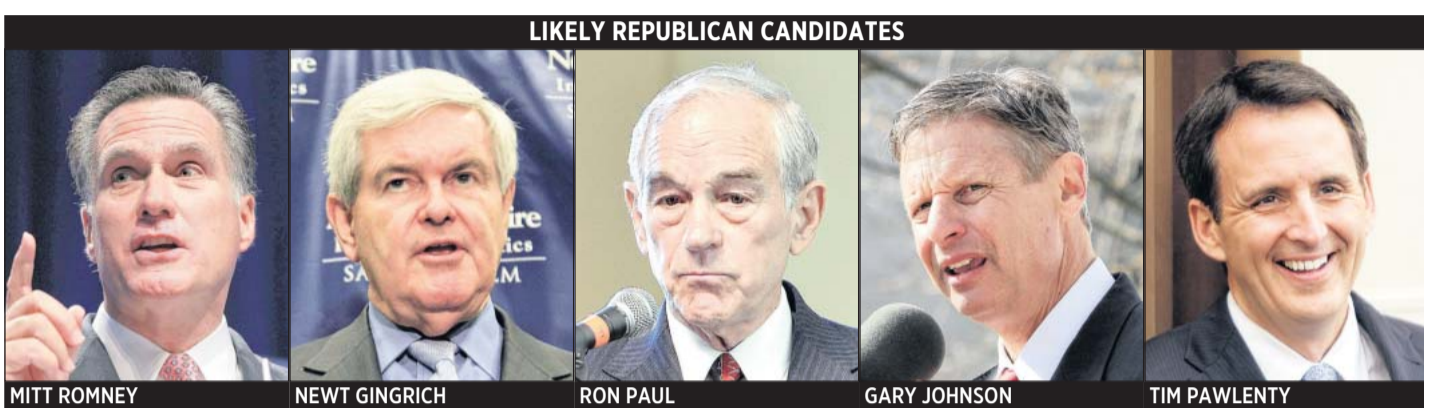
**BY FRANCES ROBLES**  
 frobles@MiamiHerald.com

Ernesto is a 26-year-old mechanical engineer turned entrepreneur.

Laid off, he chose a new profession among the list of nearly 200 new private businesses legalized by the Cuban government. He decided to become a locksmith, because a relative recently brought the required machine from Italy. But he still needed cash to buy blank keys.

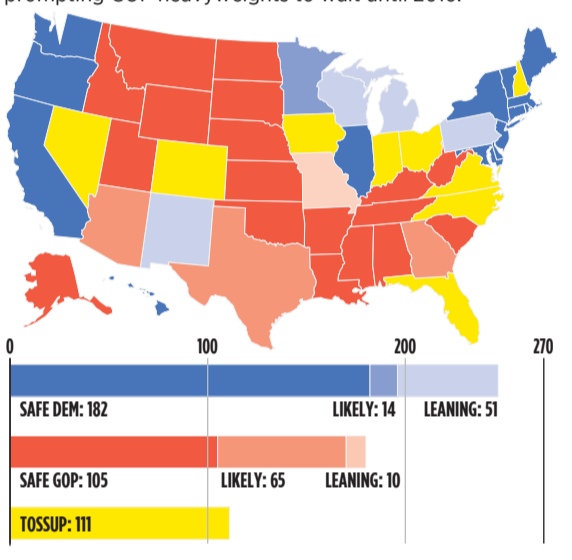
"When you start a business, you need money," said Ernesto, who spoke by phone

• TURN TO CUBA, 6A



**ELECTORAL LANDSCAPE**

Republicans made big gains in the 2010 congressional elections, but the road to the White House still goes through the Electoral College. A Republican challenger would have to practically sweep "tossup" states to oust President Barack Obama, and some analysts think that is prompting GOP heavyweights to wait until 2016.



# GOP in search of a rock star

The Republican field for president is uncertain — without a candidate, so far, to excite the electorate

**BY ADAM C. SMITH**  
 St. Petersburg Times

Something peculiar is going on with the Republican party, nationally and in Florida. After a phenomenally successful 2010, Republicans can't seem to find any giant killers to take on Barack Obama or Bill Nelson.

Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour's surprise decision this week not to run for president was just the latest reminder of how uncertain the GOP field remains and how many Republicans see Obama as tough to beat. Grass-roots activists look at Mitt Romney or Tim Pawlenty and pine for a star like Jeb Bush or New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

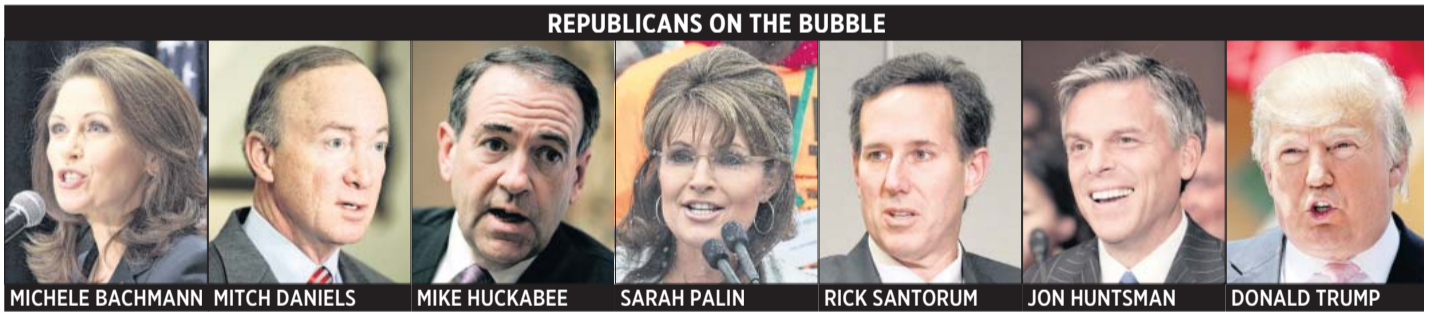
Meanwhile, the field challenging Democratic Sen. Nelson — George LeMieux, Mike Haridopolos and Adam Hasner — is sufficiently weak that activists continue to speculate

about a wealthy self-funder jumping in, just as Rick Scott shocked the establishment by beating gubernatorial front-runner Bill McCollum in 2010.

"In Florida, practically every relevant Republican backed McCollum for months, only to see the rug pulled from under him by a wealthy bald guy who came out of nowhere. That left a lasting impression. People are waiting longer to commit to one candidate," said Republican consultant Ana Navarro of Miami. "Self-funders can pop up at any moment and they can win. It sure would be nice to have a Republican knight on a white horse come riding to our rescue, but I sure hope that if that person's out there, he or she is at least dusting off the saddle by now."

Republicans swept Florida in 2010,

• TURN TO REPUBLICANS, 2A



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## Budget cuts put libraries in a bind

■ While libraries in South Florida are getting hit by a sour economy, the demand for services is increasing.

**SERENA DAI**  
 sdai@MiamiHerald.com

When Frank Rico was out of work a year ago, he used computers at the library to try to find a job.

"I came here to get the Internet," he said at the Pinecrest branch of the Miami-Dade Public Library.

Rico had plenty of company. The number of people visiting Miami-Dade libraries increased from 5.9 million people in 2006-07, when the economy was humming, to 8.3 million in 2009-10.

The theme of the story for libraries during tough times: As the economy goes down, visitors go up.

At the same time, South Florida library systems have had to tighten their

belts, with less public money for staffing, books and technology.

Libraries in Broward, for instance, eliminated Sunday hours at 36 branches. The Sunset Strip branch was shut down. Overall, library hours have decreased 6 percent since 2006, and the budget has decreased 17 percent.

As a result, the system has lost 312 staff members in the past four years.

But the first thing to go was programming, said Broward County Library Associate Director Julie Hunter. From basic computer training and financial literacy courses to cultural events and book readings for children, most programming must be funded by



MARICE COHN BAND/MIAMI HERALD STAFF  
**IN PINECREST:** Buster Brown reads with son Eden.

outside sources like Friends of Libraries groups or private grants.

"We really had to cut back," Hunter said. "It'll be a while before we get comfortable in our personal lives and our libraries."

The Miami-Dade system has managed to avoid major cuts.

• TURN TO JUMP\_TO TAG WITH

**GUANTANAMO BAY WIKILEAKS**

## Many Afghans held without terror link

■ Beyond a core of extremist commanders, the Afghans held at Guantánamo were a jumble of conscripts, insurgents, criminals and bystanders.

**BY TOM LASSETER**  
 McClatchy News Service

WASHINGTON — Naqibullah was about 14 years old when U.S. troops detained him in December 2002 at a suspected militant's compound in eastern Afghanistan.

The weapon he held in his hands hadn't been fired, the troops concluded, and he appeared to have been left behind with a group of cooks and errand boys when a local warlord, tipped to the raid, had fled.

A secret U.S. intelligence assessment written in 2003 concluded that Naqibullah had been kidnapped and forcibly conscripted by a warring tribe affiliated with the Taliban. The boy told interrogators that during his abduction he had been held at gunpoint by 11 men and raped.

Nonetheless, Naqibullah was held at Guantánamo for a full year.

Afghans make up the largest group by nationality held at the Guantánamo Bay detention center, an estimated 221 men and boys in all. Yet they were frequently found to have had nothing to do with international terrorism.

• TURN TO WIKILEAKS, 6A

• **Inside:** Cables take a dim view of Panama leader, 4A

**NATION, 3A**

**WOMEN LEAD IN HIGHER DEGREES**

CENSUS FIGURES SHOW A DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE WORKPLACE

**LOCAL & STATE, 1B**

**MIAMI-DADE TRANSIT CHIEF QUILTS**

HARPAL KAPOOR ABRUPTLY RESIGNS AFTER FAILING TO RESTORE MILLIONS IN FEDERAL FUNDS

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**CONSUMER CONFIDENCE SINKS**

ECONOMIC GLOOM WORSENS IN FLORIDA OVER RISING GAS PRICES AND FEAR OF SPENDING CUTS

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## POLITICS

# Republicans in search of next star

## • REPUBLICANS, FROM 1A

decimating the Democratic ranks in Tallahassee and leaving Nelson as the sole remaining statewide Democrat. Heading into the 2012 cycle, meanwhile, Obama's approval ratings are slipping, gas prices are rising and the economy remains shaky.

Still, there is a big difference between a midterm election and a presidential election. Florida has nearly 570,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans and in a high turnout presidential election year, that can be decisive.

"As a Republican I have to be realistic about Bill Nelson," said Republican consultant Phil Vangelakos of Orlando. "In 2010 we fielded a rock star in Marco Rubio, and he couldn't get above 50 percent. ... In 2012 we've got to ask ourselves: In a presidential election, does Florida have what it takes to go Republican? It's not nearly as likely in 2012 as it was in 2010."

Predictions 18 months early are worthless. At this point in the 1992 election cycle, President George H.W. Bush enjoyed 76 percent approval ratings and Bill Clinton was still five months



JOE RIMKUS JR./MIAMI HERALD  
**LONE DEMOCRAT:** Sen. Bill Nelson has shown a knack for winning Republican votes.

away from announcing his candidacy.

Obama is vulnerable, yet pessimism abounds in the GOP.

Sen. Nelson, meanwhile, has never been a polarizing figure, long showing a knack for winning Republican votes. And none of his rivals looks especially daunting.

LeMieux is tainted among many conservatives by his long association with former Gov. Charlie Crist, who appointed him to the Senate; Florida Senate President Haridopolos is raising plenty of money but has been wounded by ethics scandals, including a sweetheart

book deal from the community college that used to employ him; former House Majority Leader Hasner, who flirted with being state GOP chairman before jumping into the Senate primary, was better known in the Legislature for hyper-partisan rhetoric and aggressive money-raising than substantive accomplishment.

"There's no excitement for any of the guys running in the U.S. Senate race right now," said Republican consultant Chris Ingram of Tampa.

"For me, it's just more of the same. None of these guys has demonstrated anything of significant accomplishment that makes you say wow — and they're not great communicators."

The low-key, slow-starting Republican presidential contest looks just as wide open. A recent New York Times poll found nearly 6 in 10 Republicans could not point to a single contender who sparked their enthusiasm.

Nine candidates have taken some step toward running: former Minnesota Gov. Pawlenty; U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas; former Massachusetts Gov. Romney; former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum; former

## GOP 2012 presidential derby

### Who's likely in?

- Former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson. Wants U.S. out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Supports legalizing marijuana and gay civil unions.
- Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas. Hoping third time's the charm in running for the White House
- Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. Must convince Republicans that his healthcare plan in Mass. was not the same as Obama's.
- Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Must compete with fellow Minnesota Michele Bachmann.
- Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. His personal life may not sit well with socially conservative Republicans.

### Who's out?

- Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour. He surprised many by deciding to drop out, saying he didn't have enough fire in the belly.

### Who's on the bubble?

- Donald Trump. Is he

serious? Polls have him as the current leader.

- Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels. The former Office of Management and Budget director under President George W. Bush won't make a decision until May.
- Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. A likable candidate, but is he a winning one?
- Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann. She's very popular among tea party types in the GOP and is buying national online advertising.
- Former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, outgoing U.S. ambassador to China. Must overcome tag of being part of Obama administration.
- Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum. An ardent social conservative who lost big in a Senate re-election bid in 2006.
- Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin. She's been out of the spotlight since cancellation of 'Sarah Palin's Alaska' show on TLC.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich; former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain;

former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer; and former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson.

Meanwhile, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels says he will make up his mind soon, and varying degrees of speculation continue to surround the prospective candidacies of U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, and developer/reality TV star Donald Trump.

One Republican presidential debate has already been postponed, and less than a week before Fox airs the first major debate of the election it's unclear who will show up.

POLITICO reported that major candidates expected to participate include Pawlenty, Gingrich, Santorum, Paul and possibly Bachmann.

"Both in the GOP primary for president and in Florida, we have no heir apparent. There is nobody who stands heads and shoulders above the rest. They are totally open fields," said Navarro. "At the national level, it's hard to pick a candidate to support when we still don't know who is in and who's not."

Times researcher Natalie Watson contributed to this report. Adam Smith can be reached at [asmith@sptimes.com](mailto:asmith@sptimes.com).

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## • JUMP\_FROM TAG WITH 8

cor cuts, although it has felt the impact of the budget whacks at a time demand is increasing.

"When people have to tighten their belts, the first things that they cancel is their Internet access, their cable, their entertainment," said Victoria Galana, the public information officer for Miami-Dade Public Library. "Since we supply all of that for free, we're seeing people come in for higher numbers."

Miami-Dade libraries faced an \$11 million budget gap in the past fiscal year, but the system has managed to keep evening and weekend hours, and no branches have closed. Libraries in Miami-Dade receive a portion of property taxes and do not have to compete with other services for funding.

"We definitely buck the trend," Galan said. But it hasn't been easy — and South Florida is not alone.

Nationally, 72 percent of public libraries in the country faced cuts, with 43 percent downsizing staff, ac-

ording to a survey by the Library Journal. Libraries rely mostly on public funding, but 19 states cut money to libraries and 17 reported library closings in spite of increases in visits, according to an American Library Association survey.

And when the recession hit, a record 68 percent of Americans held a library card, a familiar sign of economic downfall. In a time when libraries must keep up with the digital age, cuts mean older computers, un-renewed subscriptions, and delayed software upgrades across the country.

Even for the comparatively well off Miami-Dade libraries, a shortfall has caused delays on computer updates, purchase of new materials and renovations.

Not only can technology remain stagnant, loss in staff stunts the help visitors receive in working computers. Budget shortfalls at the North Miami Beach Public Library, which is not part of the Miami-Dade system, forced cuts of three full-time positions, or about 30 percent of the full-time staff,

said manager Susan Sandness. Another two full-time positions are on hold.

But with more people looking for jobs or school scholarships, visitors need help.

"They're hungry to know how [to use the Internet], and they think if they get any information online, it's the truth," she said. "We help them find vetted information."

The North Miami Beach Library was also forced to cut hours on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and Sunday hours were just restored last fall after a couple year hiatus. Like Broward County libraries, programs like basic computer lessons or financial advice — helping people get back on their feet — are either led by a volunteer or paid for by outside sources because they can no longer fund them.

"We're getting to the bone," Sandness said. "We get most of our money from property taxes. Well, those don't go back up until property values go up. We're digging in for the long haul."

Despite funding peril, public libraries remain one of the most popular government services and histori-



MARICE COHN BAND/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**STORY TIME:** Sharon Carpenter, right, a children's librarian, at the Miami-Dade Pinecrest branch, reads 'If You're Hoppy' to tumbling toddlers.

cally have fared pretty well at the ballot box. In 2009, voters passed 84 percent of library funding referendums nationwide and 54 percent of library construction measures, according to the Library Journal.

Aside from the practical uses in tough times, South Floridians bring their chil-

dren to the libraries for homework and programming. Toddlers and their parents attend the Pinecrest Branch Library of Miami-Dade libraries for a toddler book reading on Friday mornings.

Carmen Diaz Allberty of Kendall, 78, visits the branch every week with her daugh-

ter and grandchildren. While her daughter uses the Internet, the toddlers read books and play games on computers. Diaz Allberty sees it as a place of community.

"This is a place to entertain the people," she said. "It's a place to make friends."

Mother's Day is May 8

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## LEGISLATURE 2011

# Secret state budget talks lead to a deal

## • BUDGET, FROM 1A

to eliminate the corporate income tax within seven years and cut property taxes by \$1.4 billion over two years.

The accord all but guaranteed an on-time May 6 finish to the session and was of particular relief to Senate President Mike Haridopolos, a Republican running for U.S. Senate, who has asked voters to judge him on his time as the leader of the upper chamber.

Haridopolos has also made open government part of his political legacy, yet he hashed out the deal with House Speaker Dean Cannon in private.

Haridopolos said legislative leaders typically discuss bottom-line budget "allocations" out of the public eye. And he saw no reason to stop now.

"This is how it's always been done in Florida," Haridopolos said, promising that the fine-point negotiations "will be done in public" to decide the extent, say, of Medicaid hospital cuts, K-12 school reductions or the extent of privatization in Florida's prison system.

The public discussions

will begin Wednesday morning in joint House-Senate budget committees.

As for Cannon, Haridopolos said gratefully, "our friendship paid off in getting through a tough time."

The Republican goodwill was strained Monday when Haridopolos' budget chief, state Sen. J.D. Alexander, teed off on Cannon for using "gamesmanship," hiding in the "shadows" and pulling a "stunt" or two in an attempt to manipulate Haridopolos' political ambitions for his own gain.

To make peace with Cannon, Haridopolos persuaded Alexander to take up the speaker's plan to ask voters to restructure the Florida Supreme Court.

Cannon wouldn't comment on Alexander, and instead let his budget director, Rep. Denise Grimsley, take on the outspoken Lake Wales Republican senator.

She said Alexander appeared to overrule the Senate president at times and seemed to be drawing the House and Senate farther apart when they should have been closer together.

Grimsley said she wondered who ran the Senate, Alexander or Haridopolos.

Gov. Scott said he drew comfort that "the process has started." But reporters pointed out that the budget process is a week away from being complete, and Scott won't be able to deliver on his promise to cut more than \$2.4 billion in taxes and fees.

"I'm confident that the right thing will happen," Scott said, "that we're going to reduce the size of government, the cost of government and we're going to make sure that we get money back into taxpayers' hands through tax reductions."

In rare public remarks as he stood by Cannon on the House floor, Haridopolos noted that lawmakers struggled to come to a preliminary deal as they faced a nearly \$4 billion budget shortfall. He said lawmakers didn't raise taxes, fees or "take money out of the struggling Florida economy."

But they do.

By changing state-worker retirement plans and cost-of-living adjustments, lawmakers are essentially cutting pay 3 percent — a move that could minimally affect consumer spending in a state where the state is the

largest employer. Also, lawmakers are raising college tuition and they're lowering the value of state-subsidized scholarships, known as Bright Futures.

The Senate agreed to set aside about \$30 million for a weeklong back-to-school sales-tax break pushed by the House. But it hasn't budgeted other tax breaks, aside from business-development incentives of about \$150 million — about half of what Scott wanted.

The chambers have set aside about \$300 million, but not all that money will be used for tax breaks, Alexander said.

Some could be used to fund schools or other legislative priorities.

Alexander suggested his outburst paid off: The House moved closer to the Senate's last offer. But the Senate also moved. He said the deal happened thanks to "the magic of the legislative process."

How did Haridopolos calm his frustrated budget chief? He wouldn't say when asked.

Staff writers Mary Ellen Klas, Janet Zink and Michael C. Bender contributed to this report.