

# Take that, Charlie! And this (check)

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Our cheerful governor, Charlie Crist, gutted Florida's laws on growth by signing the awful Senate Bill 360.

Who needs roads, anyway? Just let the builders build, and we'll figure out the rest later.

How the editorial pages thundered, the pundits pundited, the tree huggers raged!

And, indeed, Crist now has been duly punished. We showed him, all right. We made him feel the lash of public outrage by ...

By giving him \$4.3 million in contributions for his U.S. Senate campaign so far. *That'll* learn him!

Good grief. Like young Anakin Skywalker, Crist has learned that the Dark Side has its rewards. He should start dressing in black and breathing heavily.

Heck, if I were Crist, I'd consider repealing the rest of Florida's growth and environmental laws in his final year as governor. At the very least, I'd sign SB 360 *again*, just to see if it raised any more dough.

Four-point-three-million! That's more than 10 times the money raised by his Republican primary rival, Marco Rubio, who has the same chances as the Baltimore Orioles have of winning the World Series this year — mathematically possible, but requiring a miracle.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, the non-Charlie part of it, Florida's cities and counties are trying to figure out what this new law means.

SB 360 — the wonderfully named "Community Renewal Act" — gets rid of a rule that we've had in place for a quarter-century, saying that we won't allow growth without the roads to support it.

The immediate question is: If local governments already have made deals with developers, getting them to chip in for new roads and such, are those deals still any good? Nobody knows. There probably will have to be a big honking lawsuit to figure it out.

Speaking of lawsuits, a group of Florida's cities and counties already has filed one, seeking to have the Community Renewal Act thrown out on two grounds:

(1) The law violates the rule in our state Constitution that every law has to have a "single subject."

Although SB 360 supposedly is about "growth," it does wander around a bit. The Legislature stuck other stuff in there, including a lot about affordable housing, and a weird digression into the regulation of security cameras.

I hope that the courts rule for the cities and counties on this point, and use this case to establish a precedent. Our Legislature has gone way overboard in recent years with huge, "omnibus" bills that contain much mischief (see nuclear power plants, advance billing for, hidden inside a big "energy bill").

(2) SB 360 also forces Florida cities and counties to spend a lot of money to comply with it, without the Legislature either giving them the money or telling them where they can get it. This kind of bossing-around is called an "unfunded mandate," and it is forbidden by the Constitution.

Here, too, the locals have a point. For starters, there are all kinds of new rules and procedures they have to spend money to follow. But more important, if the growth industry isn't going to pay for the impacts of growth, then who will pay? You already know the answer — the rest of us, either with higher taxes or with more crowded roads.

Not that the governor needs to care; he's Washington-bound. Heck, if he does any worse as governor, we might give him even more money. That'll *really* show him.

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