



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Dean Ridings
321-283-5277
Wendy Walker
850-521-1220, ext. 2

“Decision 2014: Before You Vote” Rules explained

Ft. Lauderdale – Last night’s debate began with a delay as the campaign staff from both campaigns were reviewing the rules as they related to the use of a fan.

Both campaigns received a letter in advance from the debate organizers (FPA and LF) stating the format, logistics and other detailed information relating to the debate. The letter also specified that “candidates may not bring electronic devices (including fans), visual aids or notes to the debate, but will be provided with a pad and pen.” The Scott campaign signed and returned the letter on Thursday, October 9. The Crist campaign signed and returned the letter on Monday, October 13, but with the added hand-written note “*with understanding that the debate hosts will address any temperature issues with a fan if necessary.” Dean Ridings, FPA President, received and reviewed the note and told the Crist campaign that the partners want all candidates to be comfortable, but that he expected that Bailey Hall, the newly renovated-facility at Broward College where the debate was to be held, would be maintained at a comfortable temperature, and if there was a temperature problem, the partners would deal with it appropriately.

At 6 p.m. Wednesday night, the temperature was checked on the stage under the lights, and was determined to be 67 degrees. Ridings then informed the Crist Campaign that there was no temperature issue, and no fan would be needed, or permitted. At 6:20 p.m., the temperature was checked again, and was at 66 degrees, again, under the lights on the stage by the podium. Between 6 and 6:20 p.m., someone from the Crist campaign placed a fan under Charlie Crist’s podium, and they were again told that no fans would be permitted.

In the minutes before airtime, the communication among the campaigns, the producing television station and the debate partners was chaotic and there undoubtedly was some confusion, but Governor Scott never told Ridings or Wendy Walker, President, Leadership Florida, that he would not join the Debate. Rather, the Scott campaign was

waiting on resolution of the rules issue before Scott took the stage. The debate partners appreciate Governor Scott's willingness to participate in the Debate.

Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association did not anticipate or plan for the possibility that a candidate would not honor the Debate rules. In retrospect, the Debate Partners should have been better prepared for this possibility. In addition, we regret that one candidate was allowed to take the stage and allowed to talk before the fan issue was resolved.

Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association regret that the rules of the debate as discussed with both campaigns were not followed. However, we hope that this important debate of the issues discussed by both candidates is not overshadowed by this issue. The intent of this debate is to educate Florida's voters about the candidates' views. We are pleased that this debate allowed for that to happen.

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