



FIRST® *in Florida*

Inspiring Florida's Youth to Excellence in Science & Technology!

***FIRST* Legislative Agenda**

- *FIRST*'s mission is to inspire young people to become science and technology leaders by engaging them in exciting after-school, mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills as well as creating an environment that fosters well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership
- While *FIRST* is doing well, there are two challenges for *FIRST*, the states, and the nation:
 - Developing a needed additional one million US STEM workers in the next eight years – therefore engagement programs like *FIRST* need to inspire a million additional students in the next three-to-five years
 - Improving diversity in the STEM workforce – while *FIRST*'s diversity is better than STEM professionals, it doesn't reflect the nation's population
- To meet these challenges we need to fund underserved school participation in *FIRST* and other successful after-school STEM programs:
 - While it isn't expensive to participate in these programs, there are expenses; e.g., teacher stipends, space to build the robots, some tools and parts, travel to competitions, etc.
 - While more affluent schools can afford the \$10-15,000 a year, many underserved inner city and rural schools cannot
- States should be an integral part of STEM workforce development by
 - Supporting *FIRST*'s efforts in Washington DC to obtain for states a portion of H-1B visa fees our corporations pay to import foreign STEM workers and use those funds so underserved schools are able to participate in after-school STEM engagement programs
 - If H-1B visa funds are unavailable, finding another source of funding
 - Developing a simplified program to distribute those funds to underserved schools
- *FIRST* needs our legislators not just to support efforts to fund such state and local programs, but to be our champions to help find funding vehicles to enable the growth of *FIRST* and programs like it, both in numbers and diversity