|  |
| --- |
| www.floridatoday.com  July 9, 2010  Haridopolos calls Crist's energy plan a 'fantasy'  <http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20100709/NEWS01/7090314/1006/Haridopolos%20calls%20Crist%20s%20energy%20plan%20a%20fantasy>   Jobs growth gets focus at summit  *BY JIM WAYMER FLORIDA TODAY*  Forcing Florida to get 20 percent of its energy from solar, biomass and other renewable sources could save jobs when the space shuttle program ends, business and environmental leaders said Thursday at an energy summit.  It also could help keep in the state some of the $30 billion Florida spends annually on importing oil.  But incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos pointed to Gov. Charlie Crist as the snag.  "Right now the governor is saying, 'Build all this alternative energy, but no one's going to pay for it.' That's just fantasy," Haridopolos told a crowd of about 300 business, government and research leaders at Marriott's Orlando World Convention Center.  He was referring to a bill that died last legislative session that would have allowed Florida Power & Light Co. to pass along the cost of developing new solar power to rate payers. The House passed the bill, but the Senate balked when Crist vowed to not sign it if it included the rate increase.  Haridopolos criticism of Crist came moments after attendees at the Florida Energy Summit heard of the governor's announcement of a special session, July 20-23, to consider adding a constitutional amendment on November's ballot to ban oil drilling in state waters.  Haridopolos said there likely won't be enough votes to get it on the ballot and that a constitutional amendment is unnecessary because a state law already bans drilling in state waters.  Crist issued an executive order in 2007, calling for a 20 percent renewable energy goal by 2020, but left it up to the Legislature to come up with the details. Two years later, a similar proposal passed the Senate but wasn't taken up by the House.  No state senator reintroduced that bill this year. In the House, a bill to set a 5 percent renewable energy goal stalled in committee.  Environmentalists have been lobbying for several years for a so-called "renewable portfolio standard" to require 20 percent renewables by 2020.  It would create stable markets to reduce risk for utilities to pursue more renewable energy projects, panelists at Thursday's summit said. It also would level the playing field with about 30 other states that require a certain portion of their energy come from renewables, panelists said, as would a federal cap on carbon pollution.  "You really need that certainty," said Susan Glickman, director of the Florida Business Network for Green Energy Economy and a lobbyist for renewable energy policies.  "That's what's going to help people like the Space Coast," she said, referring to the pending job loss when the shuttle program ends next year.  A renewable standard and carbon cap could provide certainty in the market that would allow utilities to pursue more solar and other renewable projects, panelists said.  "The costs (for solar energy) have come down dramatically, even in the past couple of years," said Eric Silagy, a senior vice president at FPL, who spoke on a panel that discussed economic development.  Every 100 megawatts of power produced by solar costs only 7 cents per month over the life of the project, he said.  The chorus throughout the one-day summit: Clean energy technology could create 40,000 jobs in Florida.  A solar power plant FPL recently built at Kennedy Space Center stands as an example of how government can prove such projects save energy and jobs, panelists said.  The key to creating policies that promote more clean energy jobs in Florida is building consensus, Haridopolos said.  "Everyone's going to have a seat at the table. That's the hallmark of our democracy," he said in his closing remarks. "It is an ongoing process to make this innovation work."  ***Contact Waymer at 242-3663 or*** [***jwaymer@floridatoday.com***](mailto:jwaymer@floridatoday.com)***.*** |