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Economist: 'It's getting harder...to create jobs' in Florida

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Jobs aren't cropping up in Florida quite like they used to, and with public-private partnerships on the chopping block, the tide is unlikely to turn any time soon.

That was the message economist Jerry Parrish had for the 1,000 attendees of the Broward Workshop's "State of the County" forum on Friday.

"It's getting harder and harder to create jobs in this state," he said, joking that he must have missed the memo to "keep it upbeat." "You don't have to kill Visit Florida. You don't have to kill Enterprise Florida. Just talking about killing those things is killing jobs."



Eliminating the partnerships would harm tourism, one of the tri-county region's most dominant industries, said Parrish, chief economist and director of research for the Florida Chamber Foundation, a business advocacy group.

Jerry Parrish quote"

“ If you don't remember anything I said, remember that: This directly affects Florida's future.

Jerry Parrish, economist

"If you don't remember anything I said, remember that: This directly affects Florida's future," he said.

Parrish's comments come as the legislature is weighing whether to cut funding or outright eliminate Enterprise Florida, which provides tax incentives to attract businesses, and Visit Florida, the state's public-private tourism agency.

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Despite the battle in Tallahassee, Broward is in good shape, forum speakers said. The county added more than 2,300 high-skill jobs last year, Mayor Barbara Sharief said. Port Everglades recently reached a personal best, seeing a record 55,000 travelers in a single day of 2016. And unemployment hovers below the state average — at 4.5 percent, compared to 5 percent.

Broward County in 2015 by the numbers



2,300

High-skill jobs added last year



4.5%

Employment rate

But with the fates of Visit Florida and Enterprise Florida's uncertain, Parrish predicted a less-than-sunny future.

The number of new jobs created statewide peaked in 2015 at nearly 300,000, and has since slid about 18 percent. Parrish said the trend is likely to extend into upcoming years, especially if the legislature downsizes the state's tourism and economic development agencies.

Florida's economy relies heavily on tourism, retail and transportation.

More than 94,000 Broward residents work in hospitality. Enumerating Broward County's biggest economic drivers, Sharief named the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Port Everglades and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The event was sponsored by the Broward Workshop, a private, nonprofit, non-partisan business organization. Other speakers included George Piro, special agent in charge of the FBI Miami division. Piro identified cyber security as one of the biggest threats to South Florida businesses. The state ranks highest in the country in incidences of identity theft, which often occur through data breaches, he said, adding that he himself has been a target.

Story courtesy of South Florida Business Journal