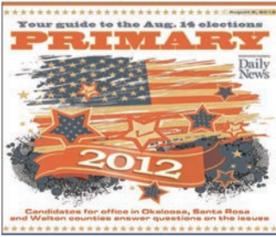


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Scott: Defense cuts to hurt Florida

TALLAHASSEE (AP) — Republican Gov. Rick Scott on Thursday called on leaders of Congress to stop potential federal budget cuts that he said would be devastating to Florida's fragile economy.

Scott sent a letter that warned as many as 39,000 jobs could be lost in the Sunshine State next year if billions in automatic cuts in national defense spending take effect in January. The

cuts are part of a deficit-reduction plan approved last year by Congress.

The decision by Scott to wade into the fray over budget cuts is a bit of change since he has been a fierce critic of federal spending in the past.

Scott rejected more than \$2 billion in money for a high-speed rail and has defended cutting public jobs in state and local government

as a way to help the economy.

"While I agree with many Americans that the federal government must reduce spending, reduce taxes and create an environment conducive to private sector job growth, I urge you to prioritize the safety and security of our nation and the strength of our economy," Scott wrote.

The governor urged both House Speaker John Boehner and Senate

Majority Leader Harry Reid to "replace the impending and disastrous defense cuts" with cuts in other programs.

Scott's only suggestion on where to cut was to repeal the federal health care overhaul, although the Congressional Budget Office recently said the overhaul would shrink rather than increase America's huge federal deficits over the next decade.

In his letter, Scott noted that Florida is home to 20 military installations and said almost 700,000 direct and indirect jobs are defense related. He suggested the cuts would not only harm the state's economy — where unemployment is now 8.6 percent — but could "jeopardize the safety of Floridians."

PLEASE SEE CUTS | A5

TAKING IN THE VIEW



A bicyclist enjoys a view of Choctawhatchee Bay on Thursday afternoon as he cools off in the shade of the gazebo at Clement Taylor Park in Destin.

MARK KULAW | Daily News

Officers search for shooting suspect

By LAUREN SAGE REINLIE
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Law officers on Thursday were searching for a 36-year-old man wanted for shooting a woman in the street in the Ocean City neighborhood late Wednesday afternoon.

Joe "J" Fernandez, who recently moved to Fort Walton Beach after living in the Miami Beach area, is wanted for allegedly shooting Tamera Sheffield, 32, who was seriously wounded about 5:15 p.m., according to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. Fernandez is thought to have fled the area in a stolen car with 21-year-old Kiera Bethune, also of Fort Walton Beach, who might or might not be endangered, the Sheriff's Office reported.



JOE "J" FERNANDEZ

ON THE NET
See a file video and slideshow from the shooting scene at nwfddailynews.com.

Sheffield told investigators at a hospital in Pensacola on Thursday afternoon that Fernandez is an acquaintance of hers, according to the Sheriff's Office. She said

PLEASE SEE SHOOTING | A5

Walton lags in emergency management score

By TOM McLAUGHLIN
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ON THE NET
Read the survey at nwfddailynews.com.

DeFUNIAC SPRINGS — Walton County's emergency management operation was one of only two in Florida to score less than "exemplary" when Gov. Rick Scott's office handed out grades this week it had compiled through a survey.

The county did score "above program standards," according to Stormy LeBlanc, Florida's Region 1 emergency management coordinator.

Walton County Sheriff Mike

Adkinson, who supervises emergency management operations, called the findings "a Romper Room report" and vowed to challenge the governor's office.

"Even if they change it, I still think the whole thing is ludicrous," he said.

Adkinson said Walton County was flagged because it did not have a debris removal plan in place.

A representative of the state Department of Emergency

Management, later identified as LeBlanc, had requested just last week that Walton's emergency managers improve their debris removal plan, Walton officials said.

The plan was one the previous regional director had approved for years, Adkinson said. LeBlanc had been on the job for about three months when she made the request.

The grades came out while the new debris removal plan was being updated, Adkinson said, and Walton County was cited because it didn't have a plan in place.

"We asked them if there would be a problem, and were told not

to worry," he said. "If they'd have said it was an issue we could have turned in our old plan."

Scott's decision to rank or grade local emergency management offices has been controversial since it was announced.

It was criticized again after the Palm Beach Post reported the grades had been released and 65 of 67 counties had achieved the highest possible score of exemplary.

Bradford County near Gainesville was the only other county not to get an exemplary grade.

PLEASE SEE WALTON | A5

LOCAL
MAGAZINE: APPRIVER, WARREN AVERETT O'SULLIVAN CREEL AND BITWIZARDS AMONG BEST TO WORK FOR | B1

HERE'S WHERE TO FIND YOUR FAVORITE CONTENT

BUSINESS	A7	LOTTERY	C3
CLASSIFIED	C10-12	MOVIES	C8
COMICS	C9	OBITUARIES	B2
DEAR ABBY	C8	PUZZLES	C8-9
EDITORIALS	A8	SPORTS	C17

COMMENT OF THE DAY
Mitt Romney spoke the truth on his tour of Europe. To the political class and media, that is considered a "gaffe."
Spout Off
READ WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING | B1

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