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November 03, 2009

## Burn Notice actor lobbies for state film tax credits



Better known as a spy who uses special ops training to help people, **Jeffrey Donovan** played a lobbyist for the TV (news) cameras Tuesday to highlight the

economic impact his show brings to Florida.

Photo: Jeffrey Donovan, star of *Burn Notice*, lobbying for more film tax incentives. On the left is CFO Alex Sink and on the right is Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda.

The star of USA Network's top-rated show *Burn Notice*, Donovan was at the Capitol to lobby for more state film incentives and to help announce the new Film, Entertainment and Television legislative caucus.

Flanked by about a dozen lawmakers, CFO **Alex Sink** and State Film Commissioner **Lucia Fishburne** on the Fourth Floor Rotunda, Donovan relayed one example of how his show pumps up South Florida's economy.

While filming an episode in the second season, the film crew befriended a flower vendor in a bad area near Hialeah. The next season, a writer for the show crafted an episode around a similar flower vendor and the show paid \$10,000 to rent out his shop for a day.

"The impact locally was, for this gentleman, enormous," Donovan said.

Fishburne said *Burn Notice* has paid more than \$28.4 million in Florida wages and is responsible for booking more than 7,000 hotel

room nights.

Of the \$10.8 million incentive budget in the current fiscal year, the TV show will receive \$5.2 million.

"It has truly become an incentives game," Fishburne said.

State Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, D-Tallahassee, formed the new film industry caucus, which counts 20 lawmakers as members.

"The purpose of the caucus is to put a spotlight on the industry so we can re-gain our competitive edge," she said.

Florida has slipped from third in the country (behind California and New York) to out of the top 10 in terms of the number of productions shot in the state.

As an aside: Donovan noted – to thunderous applause -- that he is in the process of establishing residency in Florida – which [lost population last year for the first time since WWII](#).

Not to piggyback on his star power, but this reporter is also in the process of establishing his residency in the Sunshine State.

-- Lee Logan, *Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau*

Posted by Times Editor at 01:49:24 PM on November 3, 2009  
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