



## Talk of the bay

By TIMES WIRES

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### **Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work Americans go**

Who says business is slowing? The U.S. economy added 180,000 jobs last month, dropping unemployment to a 4.4 percent rate that matched a five-year low. Figures released by the Labor Department on Friday show companies ramped up hiring and paid workers more. That's good news for employees and job seekers, despite some other sluggish economic signs and evidence of a painful housing slump and - a Florida mainstay - a hit on residential construction. While makers of autos, furniture, clothing and textiles struggled, sectors such as commercial construction, retailing and health care boosted payrolls. "It is a good time to be looking for a job, particularly if you have skills and education," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's [Economy.com](http://Economy.com).

### **Time to collect, tax group tells state**

Before you increase the sales tax, do a better job of collecting the one we have. That's the message Florida TaxWatch sent to the Legislature on Friday. The group says the state is missing out on \$2-billion a year in sales taxes it fails to collect on Internet, mail order and telephone transactions. Sellers that are not physically here in the state aren't required to collect the tax. That can't be changed without an act of Congress. But TaxWatch says more sellers would pay voluntarily if the Legislature joined a national effort to simplify sales tax rules.

### **Cells tell you where to go bilingually**

Bored with your cell phone talking back at you in English? Now you have options. Verizon Wireless unveiled a Spanish version of its navigation system on cell phones. The VZ NavigatorSM will guide lost souls with maps and audio turn-by-turn directions in Spanish. It will direct you to the nearest bodega, taqueria or other points of interest. The price tag for the

VZ Navigator is \$9.99 for unlimited monthly access or \$2.99 for one day. The feature is available on phones such as Motorola Razr, V3c and V3m and LG Vx8300. But, watch out. Airtime charges apply when browsing, downloading and using certain applications.

### **Regulators tough on little insurers**

We're not sure if this is a trend, but remember how property insurance companies were supposed to reduce their rates a statewide average 24 percent - yet most came up with numbers in the single digits? The state Office of Insurance Regulation has yet to question the big players like Allstate and State Farm, but this week they went after Cincinnati Insurance Co. (15,000 policies statewide). Regulators ordered Cincinnati to resubmit its 3.2 percent rate savings filing to reflect a 31.3 percent savings.

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