

Bush says he may convene special session on insurance; HURRICANE SEASON

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Gov. Jeb Bush said on Friday that he is seriously thinking of calling a special legislative session to address the soaring cost of windstorm insurance for homes, condominiums and businesses -- an issue that has been smacking state legislators in the face during an election year.

Bush made clear that an acceptable framework for new legislation would have to be worked out before he would summon lawmakers to Tallahassee for what could be the last time of his administration.

"I am not going to call a special session just to call one, because that is foolish," he told the Watchdog Report during a Friday visit to Miami. `` But we are working to build consensus."

"We don't want to do harm. We don't want to create policies that end up in the long run hurting the state," Bush said after attending the morning groundbreaking for the first **All Kids Can** Boundless Playground at Jorge Mas Canosa Park in Miami. The **CVS/Pharmacy** Charitable Trust is funding eight such parks, which are universally accessible playgrounds, around Florida.

Bush cited one policy change he would never let fly: `` having the state be the insurer of first resort."

"That would be a very bad idea," he said.

Instead, he said, Florida needs to expand its mitigation program, which he called "one of a kind in the country." He said he's waiting to hear from federal officials about "hopefully over \$100 million" that could boost the program.

Bush noted that "the reinsurance market has totally dried up," which is driving commercial insurers out of Florida.

"There is a lot we can do, maybe, to provide some financial support on a short-term basis, and all that is on the table" in discussions with lawmakers, he said.

Locally, state Rep. Julio Robaina, R- Miami, is sounding a clarion call on the issue.

He held a brainstorming session on windstorm insurance Saturday at the Coral Gables High School auditorium.

At a luncheon of the Ponce Development Association last week, he said insurance costs are at crisis levels -- and if they're not addressed, they ``will paralyze the economy in this county and the state."