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The Case Against Tax Money for Stadiums, Movies.

The Tampa Bay Rowdies owner has pledged to privately finance an $80 million renovation of Al Lang Stadium, envisioned above. If the Rowdies and other teams like the Orlando soccer team can pay for stadium renovations, why can't NFL teams?

Florida's state legislators from both political parties have resisted corporate welfare schemes in recent years, and taxpayers should celebrate.

Corporate welfare gives a select few industries special handouts at the expense of everyone else. Supporters of corporate welfare claim that such programs create jobs, but the facts demonstrate that's rarely the case. Even when jobs are created, each job comes at a tremendous cost to Floridians.

Take Enterprise Florida, for example, a public-private partnership that promised to create 200,000 jobs by 2005. After $1.7 billion in incentives, it had reached only slightly more than half of its goal as of 2013. And while the program was intended to be funded equally between public and private funds, an estimated 90 percent of its funding came from the taxpayers.

Some claim that while Enterprise Florida was a failure, other programs are still worth the taxpayer's dime. In fact, the Tampa Bay Times editorial board cited sports and tax film credits as worthy programs to keep intact, albeit with appropriate reforms.

But the facts tell another story.

When it comes to sports stadiums financed through Florida's Professional Sports Facilities Incentive Program, according to the state's own economists, for every dollar invested in sports renovation projects, the state sees only 30 cents returned in economic activity — a far cry from a sound investment.

What's more, plenty of sports owners can afford to renovate without a special taxpayer-funded deal.

Case in point: The Orlando City Soccer Club is building its own stadium. And while the Orlando team originally asked for $30 million from the state, it announced it would self-fund the stadium after citizens and lawmakers opposed state funding.

In St. Petersburg, Tampa Bay Rowdies owner Bill Edwards has pledged to privately finance an $80 million renovation of Al Lang Stadium in order to bring a Major League Soccer team to the region.

If these sports teams can renovate on their own, why do other teams such as the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Miami Dolphins or Jacksonville Jaguars deserve taxpayer money?

As for film production handouts, they too have a storied past. The state's economists find that the film subsidy program only produces up to 43 cents for every dollar invested.

The program hurts taxpayers, while often going to projects that don't produce any long-term jobs in

the Sunshine State. Of course, the film industry lobbying for the special favor alleges the program produces more revenue, but the estimates don't pass muster in comparison to the state estimates.

What's more, state after state that has gone down the road of film tax credits has paid the price of doing so. The University of Southern California conducted a national study on state programs, finding that since 1999 tax credits have created close to zero jobs, even in states like California and New York. Taxpayers, on the other hand, are still on the hook for over $10 billion to Hollywood producers and movie stars.

Floridians have enough legitimate demands on their tax dollars, such as education and transportation expenses. It's not our responsibility to ensure that Ben Affleck's new movie is profitable or that sports executives have enough extra cushion to ensure fans will flock to their fields.

For the past several years, lawmakers have rightly rejected some of these efforts to boost special interests — now is not the time to reserve course. Instead, lawmakers should keep fighting against all forms of corporate welfare so that everyone has a chance to succeed.

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By Chris Hudson

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