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Gov. Crist throws Gadsden community hospital a life line

*By Bill Cotterell
Florida Capital Bureau*

Gov. Charlie Crist threw the Gadsden County community hospital a life line this morning, signing a bill that gives the county another year to reopen the facility.

County officials and Big Bend legislators clustered behind Crist as he signed the measure (HB 873), which allows rural hospitals that have held inactive licenses for at least 20 months to get a 12-month license extension. The bill, tailored for Gadsden, requires hospitals to make progress toward reopening.

Rep. Alan Williams, D-Tallahassee, who sponsored the bill, made reopening the hospital the top priority of his campaign for the House last year. Williams said that, without an extension, the county would lose its hospital license June 30.

"This is critical to the health care of people in Gadsden County," said Williams. He said the county has already spent about \$100,000 on legal fees and needed to avoid additional administrative expenses for reopening the hospital.
