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St. Petersburg, FL -- Florida's Governor Jeb Bush is scheduled to be the first guest on a new 30-minute public affairs show to be launched this week in a joint venture between the *St. Petersburg Times* and Bay News 9. BN9 anchor Al Ruechel will host "**Political Connections**", which will air Sundays at 11 a.m. beginning Oct. 30 on Bay News 9. He will be joined by *Times* Political Editor Adam Smith for the interview segment, "**Political Times.**"

"We believe that people around Tampa Bay have an appetite for a thoughtful show about local and state matters," said *Times* Executive Editor Neil Brown. "We're delighted that journalists at the St. Pete Times will team up with Bay News 9 to produce some good political TV. Amid all the cable TV shoutfests, I think a strong public affairs show that leads to honest dialogue will be a hit."

"Bay News 9 is known for its election night coverage, so creating a weekly political show makes perfect sense," said Bay News 9 Vice President and General Manager Elliott Wiser.

Regular features will include interviews with political newsmakers, a look at the week's political headlines, and an opportunity for one community leader each week to get "On the Soapbox" for two minutes to weigh in on a big issue. Viewers also will be invited to weigh in on major issues via e-mail and instant polls. Beginning in 2006, the soap box segment will become interactive with viewers able to vote instantly via Bright House Networks ITV technology using their remote controls.

"Tampa Bay is Florida's biggest swing voter battleground, and we're heading into the busiest election cycle in a long time," the *Times'* Smith said. "This should be a great opportunity for viewers to get more than just sound bites from candidates."

Generally, the show will be taped at the Bay News 9 studio on the Friday prior to its Sunday broadcast. Gov. Jeb Bush is scheduled to be the show's first guest, subject to the impact upon his availability of Hurricane Wilma.

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About the St. Petersburg Times:

The Pulitzer prize-winning *St. Petersburg Times* is Florida's largest newspaper with a circulation of 327,390 daily and 420,811 Sunday. (ABC Audited 12/26/2004). One of the last independently owned newspapers in the US, the *Times* is owned by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a school for journalists based in St. Petersburg, Florida.

About Bay News 9:

Bay News 9 is available only on Bright House Networks, and serves over 1 million households in the Tampa Bay area. The 24-hour local news channel is based in Pinellas County with newsrooms in Manatee, Hillsborough, Polk, Citrus, Hernando and Pasco counties.