Chiles’ aim:
Health care for all by ’95

By John C. Van Gieson

WASHINGTON — Gov. Lawton Chiles announced a major initiative to reform health-care delivery and financing, which he said would result in better care for Floridians. The program, called “A Health Care Revolution,” is one of the most ambitious health-care proposals ever undertaken by a state in the nation.

Chiles said he was inspired by the success of the Canadian health-care system, which he described as “a model for the future.” He also cited the success of the Massachusetts health-care reform program, which has been praised as a model for other states.

The program, which would be implemented over several years, would include several key components:

1. Universal health care for all Floridians
2. Improved access to care for the uninsured
3. Increased funding for health care providers
4. Increased access to quality care for low-income families
5. Improved health outcomes for all Floridians

Chiles said the program would be financed through a combination of state and federal funds, as well as through increased taxation of high-income earners.

“I believe that every Floridian should have access to high-quality health care,” Chiles said. “We cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

The announcement was met with mixed reactions from Florida’s political leaders. Some praised Chiles’ initiative, while others expressed concerns about the cost and feasibility of the program.

“I think this is a brave and visionary plan,” said state Sen. Bill McCollum (R-Orlando), who is running for governor. “I am confident that we can make this work.”

However, state Rep. Dennis Baxley (R-Ocala), who is also running for governor, expressed skepticism about the plan.

“I don’t think we can afford this,” Baxley said. “It’s going to be too expensive.”

Chiles is expected to face a tough road in implementing his program, as it will require significant changes to the state’s existing health-care system.

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Chiles and archaeologists are trying to uncover the secrets of the Maya civilization.}

Chiles archaeologists redefining the Maya

By Gene Vinola

The discovery of a 1,500-year-old Maya city, which has been submerged under the floodwaters of a nearby river, has sparked a renewed interest in the study of the ancient civilization.

The city, known as El Mirador, was discovered by a team led by Chiles archaeologist John Bernal. The city is located on the southeast coast of Guatemala, near the border with Belize.

“El Mirador is one of the most important sites in the study of the Maya civilization,” said Bernal. “It is a key to unlocking the mysteries of this ancient civilization.”

The city is estimated to have had a population of 20,000 people, and it was once home to a large temple dedicated to the god Kukulkan.

“El Mirador is a key to understanding the complexity of the Maya civilization,” said Bernal. “It is a key to unlocking the mysteries of this ancient civilization.”

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Society more complex than previously thought

Maya from A-1

provide evidence of a burgeoning middle class, the archaeologists said.

"Prevalent theory said there was an elite class that overworked society and a fed-up peasant class," said Arlen Chase.

"That's just not the case. Maya society is much more complex than we thought."

Such evidence is expected to aid scholars who have sought an explanation for the downfall of the brilliant Maya people, who produced remarkable architecture, painting and sculpture from 200 A.D. to about 900 A.D.

Early theories of the civilization's collapse said a massive peasant class revolted against an oppressive, elite class. Although that view has been challenged recently, scholars lacked archaeological proof to dispute it.

But the Chases' discovery — during their eighth expedition to Maya ruins — shows that such a divide did not exist. The archaeologists found "middle-class" tombs — evidence that prosperity was shared in Caracol and that burial ceremonies were not reserved for the privileged.

Tombs tell tales

The Chases based their findings on excavations in the city's core and outskirts areas where massed commoners' tombs with jade, pottery and ritual vessels that had previously been associated only with the elite.

Scholars had once believed that the elite received individual tombs. But the Caracol findings show that members of royal families, like commoners, shared chambers or tombs.

The royal tomb the Chases uncovered housed four people, all resting on a plaster floor covered with jade flakes. Two men, one with a necklace of human teeth, were found in the tomb. A woman and an unidentified individual also were there.

The royal tomb as well as those for the middle class all held the same "ritual deposits," such as urns, jewelry and shell artifacts.

"What they've been able to show is that a continuum existed from the lower end to the upper end of society — and that differs greatly with prevalent thought," said Richard Leventhal, director of the Institute of Archeology at the University of California at Los Angeles.

"They've filled out the picture of a societal organization in a great Maya city," Leventhal said.

The Maya people — who lived in what is now Mexico and several Central American countries — studied astronomy and were one of the first people in the Western Hemisphere to develop an advanced form of writing.

A thriving city

The Caracol site covers 55 square miles. The Chases estimate the city's population may have reached 100,000, making it one of the largest in Maya history. The couple's work at the site will be shown in two National Geographic television programs Sunday and later this month.

The Chases also uncovered evidence of Caracol's success at warfare, including artifacts and records documenting how Caracol defeated the city of Tikal, once the civilization's greatest metropolis, in 682. The victory brought wealth and population growth.

"The spoils of war led to the shared prosperity in Caracol," said Diane Chase.

Such explanations about how life changed and was conducted in Caracol is the most important element of the Chases' work, said David Freidel, an anthropologist professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"They have provided a history as to how a middle class emerged in a city," said Freidel, who specializes in Maya political history and is preparing in February to embark on his sixth Mayan expedition since 1986.

Military efforts might not only have led to Caracol's rise, but also its fall, Freidel said.

Kingdom falls, but why?

The archaeologist said the Chases' discovery provides evidence of "intense, interkingdom warfare" that eventually could have led to the city's demise. That evidence includes artifacts from ceremonies celebrating military victories.

Leventhal, the UCLA archaeologist, agreed that the UCF professors' findings show that warfare contributed to Maya ruin. But he said more research must be done to show whether it was the primary cause for the fall of the civilization.

"One answer that explains the collapse — that's not viable," Leventhal said. "Warfare, environmental degradation, social problems...I believe there were interlinking factors.

"We haven't figured out what they all are yet, but the Chases are pointing the way," Leventhal said.

On TV

National Geographic is scheduled to televises two programs featuring the Chases' work at the Caracol excavation. The first is scheduled for Sunday on the Turner Broadcasting System from 9 to 11 p.m. The second program is scheduled for later this month on WMFE-Channel 24.