



LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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One week down, eight to go! But who's counting? The first week of the Legislative Session is usually reserved for ceremony and establishing a pace for the session. Not so last week. In fact, the Senate already started crafting their budget last Friday, which is precedent setting. Meanwhile, the House Appropriations Committee, in a move that is also early, will begin their work this week.

While several bills of interest passed out of committee last week - a complete rundown is in the Spotlight on Bills section of this newsletter - the House's Governance Proposed Committee Bill was not among them. Even though this important bill has not yet had its first hearing (and probably won't get one this week either), it will likely be on the agenda next week, as will the process for amending it. Meanwhile, the university building naming bills, of which there are many, did move along last week, which is a good sign.

Last Thursday, President Wetherell and UF President Machen led a caucus meeting at the Capitol. Several legislators from both universities participated in this gathering of Seminoles and Gators, where issues of mutual concern, including faculty and employee salary increases, governance, provisions for world-class scholars, and graduate-student health insurance, were discussed. Both presidents felt the meeting was very productive.

If you would like to monitor the legislative process on your own, please know that live and taped, "gavel-to-gavel" coverage of legislative sessions and committee meetings are broadcast every day on The Florida Channel (local cable channel 4).

As always, please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, or bill copies and their analysis at **(850) 644-4453** or via e-mail at **kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu**.

Kathleen

PECO UPDATE

The Revenue Estimating Conference for Public Education Capital Outlay met last week and increased the forecast of the maximum amount available for the PECO program in the upcoming fiscal year by **\$480.7 million**, for a total of \$1.88 billion in the fund. Of this total amount, \$1.46 billion is from the sale of bonds and \$417.2 million will be available as cash. Almost all of the increase in the bond sale is due to the new Gross Receipts Tax forecast, which was increased by \$35.2 million this year. This large increase is generating a large increase in bonding capacity for FY 2006-07.

Additionally, favorable interest rates have continued to allow previously authorized bond sales to be completed at interest rates below estimate, which also adds to the bonding capacity.

During the 2005 session, the Legislature passed SB 370, which directed that a portion of Documentary Stamp Tax collections be redirected to the PECO Trust Fund. For the current fiscal year, there are \$63.25 million from these distributions that remain unallocated, as well as an identical amount for next year. Thus, total unallocated cash for available FY 2006-07 will be **\$126.5 million**. These cash funds are in addition to the amount discussed above.

However, in spite of the large increase in the amount of PECO funds available to the educational delivery systems, a recommendation was made to the Legislature by the Commissioner of Education to direct all excess funds to the public schools, to address class size amendment obligations. If this recommendation is considered, an additional allocation of PECO funds will not be forthcoming to the universities. Alternative approaches are under consideration and options will be given to the Legislature for their consideration at this early stage of the session. Updates will be forthcoming.

Spotlight on Bills

HB 119 — Higher Education Finance/Residents by Representative Juan Zapata (R – Miami), revises provisions for the determination of resident status for tuition purposes and provides conditions for reclassification as a resident for tuition purposes. The bill requires that evidence be provided regarding legal residency and dependent status. Additionally, the bill provides requirements for student eligibility for state financial aid awards and tuition assistance grants. The bill passed the Colleges and Universities Committee last week. The Senate companion, SB 366 by Senator Frederica Wilson (D – Miami), is scheduled to be heard in the Education Committee on Tuesday.

HB 717 — State University Student Fees by Representative Anitere Flores (R – Miami), increases the cap on local fees and removes the annual cap on increases in local fees. The bill authorizes each university board of trustees to establish a technology fee and requires recommendations by a technology fee committee. Additionally, the bill requires final approval of the fee by the university board of trustees and provides fee limitations and excludes said fee from award under Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The bill has been referred to the Colleges & Universities and Education Appropriations Committees and the Education Council. There is no Senate companion at this time.

HB 795 — Student Financial Assistance by Representative Anitere Flores (R-Miami), creates the First Generation Matching Grant Program to provide financial aid to undergraduate students with financial need whose parents have not earned college degrees. The bill provides for appropriation, allocation and distribution of funds. The bill also establishes student eligibility requirements and provides duties of state universities participating in the program. The Board of Governors is required to adopt rules. The bill passed the Colleges and Universities Committee last week. The Senate companion, SB 1750 by Senator Al Lawson, Jr. (D – Tallahassee, FSU Alum) will be heard on Tuesday.

SB 1930 — Educational Facilities/ Planning Use by the Governmental Efficiency Appropriations Committee, requires that utilization standards for educational space be updated periodically and increases the minimum room utilization rate for postsecondary class rooms. The bill reported favorably out of the Government Efficiency committee last week. There is no House companion at this time.

HB 137 — Baccalaureate Degree Programs by Representative Stan Mayfield (R-Vero Beach), provides that community colleges that grant baccalaureate degrees remain under the authority of the State Board of Education and requires said colleges to maintain their primary mission and prohibits termination of associate degree programs. Additionally, the bill provides guidelines and restrictions for setting tuition and out-of-state fees for upper division courses, etc. The bill passed out of its first two committees of reference and has been placed on the calendar to be heard by the full House. The Senate companion, **SB 1658, by Senator Evelyn Lynn (R- Ormond Beach)** is scheduled for a hearing in the Education Committee on Tuesday.

FSU Day at the Capitol

FSU Day at the Capitol has become a popular tradition during the legislative session and a wonderful opportunity to bring Florida State University to our friends in the Legislature. With this event, we emphasize the University's long and proud heritage and bring attention to the extraordinary accomplishments of faculty and students. This year, FSU Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Wednesday, March 29, 2006.

Please join us for a day filled with informative displays in the plaza level, second and third floor rotundas from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., as well as appearances by FSU celebrities, performances by the Pep Band, cheerleaders and the Flying High Circus during the lunch hour in the courtyard beginning at 11:30 a.m. Refreshments will be available for all to enjoy. Please contact Toni Moore at 644-3847 if your department has not yet signed up for a display.

Mark your calendars now! We look forward to seeing you in your Garnet and Gold on March 29th.



Office of

GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE SESSION

Thursday, March 16, 2006

9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Friday, March 17, 2006,

9:00 a.m. to completion of agenda (if necessary)

HOUSE SESSION

Tuesday, March 14, 2006,

9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, March 16, 2006,

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

(850) 644-4453

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