



Last summer, legislative leaders talked of passing the 1998-99 budget by the second week of the 1998 session. Those of us who follow those types of statements found it difficult to believe, since it has never been done. But as the second week of this year's session ended- Friday the 13th, no less- both the House and Senate education budget committees had passed out their versions of the budgets. These versions will go before their full appropriations committees this week, with floor debate scheduled for Friday. In my 16 years in this process, I have not seen as accelerated a budget procedure as this one has been thus far.

Today is Florida State University Day at the Capitol. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase our faculty, students, and programs to legislators, staff, and lobbyists. Please plan to join us if your schedule will allow it.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you need copies of bills and their analysis, or if you have questions about issues which may concern you. I can be reached at 644-4453 or by e-mail, kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu. Information is also available on the Florida Legislature's home page, www.leg.state.fl.us. "On-Line Sunshine" can provide bill history, bill text, House and Senate calendars and Florida statutes.

Kathleen Daly

Past Week at a Glance

"Tort Reform" Addressed

The House of Representatives last Wednesday approved six bills that will make it more difficult for people to win large judgments against corporations. Some of the measures approved will: ban consumers from suing (in most cases) when the product that injured them is more than 12 years old; limit most "punitive damages" to \$250,000; and, cap payments a car rental company would have to pay in an accident to \$500,000. The Senate will debate these issues this week.

Vacancies Filled

Two recently-elected members of the Legislature were sworn in last week. John Laurent, a former House member, filled Senator Rick Dantzler's Senate seat. Dantzler, a Democrat from Polk County resigned the seat to run for Governor. J.D. Alexander, a Republican also from Polk County was elected to fill Laurent's House seat. Representative Alexander is the son of John and (alumna) Sarah Alexander, who are strong supporters of Florida State University.

Legislative Committees Abolished

After 30 years of operating as the Legislative purchasing agency, publishing journals and calendars and providing legislative research and history, the Joint Legislative Management Committee has been abolished by its chairman, Senator John Grant (FSU alumnus). Most of the committee's 250 employees will be reassigned. Another panel, the Legislative Information Technology Resource Committee, created to monitor technology issues, has also been abolished.

Session Schedule March 16-20, 1998

Senate:

Wednesday, March 18	1:30pm-3:30pm
Thursday, March 19	9:00am-10:00am
Friday, March 20	9:30am-5:00pm

House:

Tuesday, March 17	8:30am-12:00pm
Wednesday, March 18	8:30am-10:00am
Friday, March 20	8:30am-12:00pm



Spotlight on Bills

Proposed Committee Bill CCCP 98-05

The House Committee on Community Colleges and Career Prep is sponsoring a **Proposed Committee Bill, CCCP 98-05**. Initially, this bill contained a provision to allow Community Colleges to offer in certain circumstances a four-year Baccalaureate degree. In an effort to create a compromise, PCB CCCP 98-05 now contains the provision that a community college with a program they want to offer in this manner would have to have it approved by the State Board of Community Colleges. Next, it would be approved by PEPC. If approved, PEPC would assign a university to work with that community college for a joint use program. Other provisions clarify the requirements and benefits of the college-ready diploma, require community colleges to notify students of alternative remedial education instructional opportunities, and permit Academic Improvement Trust Fund scholarships to be awarded based on need rather than merit. **PCB CCCP 98-05** passed favorably last week out of the House Committee on Community Colleges and Career Prep. Currently there is no Senate companion bill.

FSU Day Resolution Passed

Last Thursday the House of Representatives passed a resolution designating **March 16th, 1998**, as Florida State University Day. **House Bill 9333** was presented on the House floor by Representative Jim King (FSU alumnus). Next week the **Senate Bill, 2238**, will be read on that chamber's floor by another FSU alumnus, Senator Charles Williams. Both bills recognize Florida State University as the oldest continuous site of higher education in the State of Florida and an outstanding institution of higher education.

House Committee on Colleges and Universities Holds Workshop on Student Fees

A proposal reviewing current postsecondary student fees, and creating a technology fee is pending before the House Committee on Colleges and Universities. The proposed committee bill permits the prepaid tuition program to offer contracts covering local fees at both Community Colleges and State Universities. Other provisions affecting State University Fees include:

*Requires 70% (rather than 50%) of funds from financial aid fee be used for need-based aid.

*Caps the aggregate sum of the financial aid fee, building fee, capital improvement fee, activity and service fee, health, athletic and technology fees at 55% of tuition assessed at the resident undergraduate level. It prohibits the raising of these fees over the 55% limit without legislative approval.

*Authorizes the president or his designee to establish miscellaneous charges for services provided at cost by the health center which are not covered by the health fee.

*Permits each university president to establish a technology fee; requires a technology fee committee to recommend the initial fee, uses of fee revenue, and subsequent increases to the technology fee; at least one-half of members must be students.

*Provides that any fees such as library fees and fines, and late registration and payment fees do not exceed the cost of the service and are not charged to persons not receiving the service.

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