

# LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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The State's 103rd regular session began last Tuesday, not just with the usual gifts and flowers, but with a heavy agenda and a clear mission. **Governor Bush**, in his State of the State address, urged lawmakers to reform Florida's voting systems, fund teacher recruitment and retention initiatives, and to act in a bipartisan manner while tackling the "big" issues. In spite of his plea, last week the Republican-led House of Representatives passed a record 32 bills, including controversial issues such as tax cuts, campaign reform, and other major policy issues. They also passed a bill that will further cut taxes on stocks, bonds, and other intangible property.

Not only were legislators uncharacteristically busy in passing bills during the first week of the session, but the House and Senate both met to continue deliberating the state budget (see related story).

The coming week, only the second of the session, shows no signs of letting up. In fact, House and Senate budget committees will meet at 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. every day this week. Senate budget subcommittees hope to finalize their spending plans by Friday. Neither chamber is planning to meet in full session this week, further evidence that each is focused on the budget and committee processes.

The education governance proposal, which will completely restructure the operations of Florida's ten state universities, is expected to come out of bill drafting today or tomorrow. This draft has not yet been finalized, so it does not have a bill number. Hearings and deliberations on this issue will begin late this week or early next.

You can catch all of the exciting, live debates between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, as well as updates on each day's major issues, on the Florida Channel (local cable channel 47). As always, I welcome your comments and any requests for bills and their analysis. You can reach me at 644-4453 or by e-mail, [kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu](mailto:kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu).

*Kathleen*

## BUDGET NEWS

As they craft next year's budget, lawmakers will have **\$228 million** less to spend than had been previously projected. This new figure was released Friday by the Revenue Estimating Conference, a group of staffers from the Legislature, Governor's office, and certain state agencies. (The state budget is based on the estimates of how much tax revenue, mostly from the state sales tax and corporate taxes, will be collected.) The conference agreed that the recent downturn in the state's economy made incoming taxes lower than had been previously estimated. Even so, House leaders, after balancing the budget and paying the **\$1 billion** Medicaid deficit, are hoping to cut taxes this session. The Senate, meanwhile, is taking a slower approach to tax cutting initiatives.

Lawmakers will meet every day this week to reconcile their budgets against this unfavorable news. Prior to the release of the new budget estimates, the House and Senate budget appropriations committees met and restored a few of the cuts they had previously taken. Restored funding critical to Florida State includes:

Public Broadcasting: 10.7 percent reduction in the House, rather than the 20 percent originally taken. Total reduction (revised) **\$1 million**. The Senate still maintains the 50 percent reduction (**\$4.6 million**). (continued)

## Online Sunshine

Florida's Legislature has gone to the web! **Online Sunshine** is a direct resource to Florida's capitol. The website contains a variety of legislative information, including: bills, calendars, journals, directories, general information on the House and Senate, citizen's guides and a kid's page. **Online Sunshine** is accessible on the internet at <http://www.leg.state.fl.us>

## Quote of the Week

"I did see Miami beat Florida State in that stadium, and that's a tradition I'd like to see for many more years!"

Senator Burt Saunders, R - Naples, commenting on a bill that would give Miami's Orange Bowl a tax rebate of \$300,000 per year for 20 years.

St. Petersburg Times, March 8, 2001

# Spotlight on Bills

## Corporate Income Tax

HB 271 by Representative **Joe Negron** (R-Stuart) passed the House this week. This bill provides a corporate income tax credit for businesses that donate to 501(c)(3)'s, which, in turn, provide scholarships for students to attend private K-12 schools or public schools outside of their district. The bill also provides for a 100% credit to a business against their corporate income tax for a non-directed charitable donation to an eligible not-for-profit scholarship organization. The scholarships must be directed to students who are participants in the free or reduced-price lunch program, among other criteria. The maximum scholarship award is **\$4,000** for those stu-

dents choosing to go to a private school, **\$1,000** for a student in a home school program, and **\$500** in transportation costs for those students going to public schools outside their own school district. No part of the contribution can be put toward administrative expenses. Corporations cannot carry over unused credit to the following year. A similar Senate bill, SB 1048 by Senator **Ken Pruitt** (R-Port St. Lucie), is scheduled for consideration by the Senate Education Committee this week.

## Math and Science Teacher Education

SB 746 by Senator **Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg) creates the Florida Alliance for Im-

proving Mathematics and Science Teaching in Education Programs. The alliance is authorized to contract with program administrators to implement K-8 inservice professional development programs for math and science teachers. The alliance is authorized to contract with the SUS, Community College system or other joint-use facilities as delivery sites. Teachers who take part in and complete the programs are eligible to receive salary increases or bonuses as well as credit toward certification. The Alliance will be made up of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education considering recommendations from PEPC, the Education Standards Commission, and the Workforce Development Board. The bill is scheduled for consideration by the Senate Education Committee this week.

## (continued)

**Autism Centers:** The House fully restored the Autism cut, as did the Senate, which means that funding levels revert to last year's total.

**Ringling Museum:** The Senate restored a 25-percent cut; the House did not originally cut the museum's funding, which means that funding levels revert to last year's total.

**College Reach Out Program:** The House restored funding to 100 percent, while the Senate's cut still stands at 100 percent. Total Senate reduction: **\$4 million**.

In addition, the House shifted **\$1.5 million**, which includes funding from the Florida Atlantic University PIMS program, into a new Biotechnology/Economic Development program for the SUS. No further details were provided.

## Universities Designations

HB 989 by Representative **David Mealor** (R-Lake Mary) was introduced this week, designating the names of various facilities at SUS universities. Included is the Women's Soccer & Softball Complex at FSU, which is to be named the "Mary Ann Stiles & Barry Smith Team Building." A similar bill in the Senate, sponsored by Senator **Jim Sebesta** (R-St. Petersburg), has yet to be given a number.



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