

# LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Volume Eleven / Number Three • March 19, 2001

Based on the number of significant issues already moving through this year's legislative session, it's hard to believe that today is only the start of the third week of the 2001 session.

The budget continues to be the dominant issue for the SUS. The Senate Subcommittee on Education passed its spending plan last Thursday. Their budget bill will be ready for the full Ways and Means Committee by this Thursday. A similar fast-track approach in the House Education subcommittee is evident. In spite of this pace, both budgets appear, thus far, to be favorable toward Florida State University (see related story).

A bill that removes about 16-thousand state employees from Career Service designation is also on a fast track. Under this bill's proposal, which is among the Governor's priority bills, Career Service employees would become Select Exempt employees. Such a change would, among other things, allow greater authority to managers in reassigning or firing their employees. Beyond that is a bill that expedites the largest transition of pension-plan funds in U.S. history, which passed a state House committee last week. HB 347 would require the retirement plans of state workers to be open to providers of private investments.

A number education-related bills were heard last week or are scheduled to be heard this week (see Spotlight on Bills). Unfortunately, the hugely anticipated Education Governance bill is not one of them. Draft legislation, however, should be available tomorrow; if it is, a summary of this bill will be available in next week's Legisletter. In the meantime, please check its status through Online Sunshine, at [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).

In other news, the leader of the Senate's Democrats, **Tom Rossin** (West Palm Beach) proposed a measure this week that would increase the term limits on state legislators from eight years to 12 years. This proposal does not, however, have a scheduled hearing date at this time.

During the most recent legislative sessions, House and Senate leaders decided to conduct their business during the "family friendly" hours of 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This year, however, they have reverted to working as late as necessary to complete their work, which has made for especially long days, as well as plenty of interrupted television coverage!

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail, at [kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu](mailto:kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu), or by phone, at 644-4453, should you have questions about the budget, or any other legislation. As always, I welcome your comments and concerns. Current information is also available through the Online Sunshine website - the official Internet site for the Florida Legislature at [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).

*Kathleen*

## BUDGET NEWS

In a bold move last week, Senate President **John McKay** (Rep.-Bradenton, FSU Alum) announced the Senate would not approve any tax cuts this year. He proposed instead that the Senate spend the additional dollars on health, human services, and education issues.

This year's budget - the only bill lawmakers are constitutionally required to pass - has been tight because of **\$1 billion** in unanticipated Medicaid payments and a reduction in state revenue. Last week, both the House and Senate Education Budget committees released their final spending proposals, which were approved and sent to their full committees for a hearing this week. Among the major issues related to FSU and the SUS:

**TUITION:** The House proposes a 5 percent across-the-board increase, with an additional 2.5 percent differential, which raises **\$10.7-million** for local initiatives. The Senate proposes a 5 percent increase, which funds their enrollment plan.

**ENROLLMENT:** The House funds the BOR's enrollment plan at **\$59.2 million**. The Senate, meanwhile, puts **\$9.9 million** in general revenue toward the enrollment plan (raising tuition by 5 percent), which adds an addi-

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## SESSION SCHEDULE March 19 - 23

### Senate

Wednesday, March 21 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Thursday, March 22 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

### House

Wednesday, March 21 1:30 - 6:00 p.m.  
Thursday, March 22 1:30 - 6:00 p.m.

## Quote of the Week

"We have a tight budget year, and in a tight budget year you can't undertake tax cuts if there is not a surplus. Perhaps next year we can do it."

-Senate President John McKay, discussing the tax-cutting proposals put forth by the Governor and House Speaker

Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, March 14, 2001

# Spotlight on Bills

The Board of Regents this week recommended to the legislature several changes in the requirements and award amounts of the Bright Futures Scholarships. It is believed that many Bright Futures recipients are able to pay their own educational costs, while other recipients have a financial need greater than the amount the scholarship awards.

Currently, there are three different types of scholarships, each with separate criteria. For an Academic Scholarship, the applicant must have a 3.5 GPA and an SAT score of 1270 in order to receive full tuition and fees plus **\$600** annually, for a total of **\$1,500** per semester. The Merit Scholarship requires a 3.0 GPA and an SAT score of 970 for an award paying 75 percent of tuition and fees, for a total of **\$900** per semester. The Gold Seal Scholarship for vocational education requires a 3.0 GPA plus at least 3 secondary vocational credits for an award paying 75 percent of tuition and fees -- a total of approximately **\$900**.

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tional **\$22 million** to the enrollment fund, for a total of about **\$31 million**.

**FSU MEDICAL SCHOOL:** The House continues last year's funding and adds **\$4.1 million** in new dollars for a total of more than **\$16 million** in recurring revenue. The Senate, while initially taking a 25 percent cut to the base funding, restored all but 4 percent of last year's amount and then added **\$3.9 million** in new dollars, for a total of about **\$14 million** in recurring revenue.

**CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM:** The House added **\$23.2 million** to the Challenge Grant Program; the Senate added **\$5 million**.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- The House restored the **\$9.5 million** cut to the State Employee Fee Waiver program; the Senate did not
- The House included **\$1.8 million** for a School of Chiropractic at Florida State University; the Senate includes **\$325,000**

The BOR recommends:

... Raising the GPA required for Merit Scholars to 3.25. Currently, more students qualify for Merit Scholarships than qualify to be admitted to state universities. This is because the weighted GPA requirement for the award is equal to the unweighted minimum GPA required for admission by the BOR. Increasing the GPA to 3.25 will make the award a true scholarship, and could save the state approximately **\$20 million**.

... Scaling back the award for Academic Scholars to **\$1,000** per full-time term or **\$500** per part-time term with a lifetime maximum of **\$8,000** awarded per student.

... Scaling back the award for Merit and Gold Seal Scholars to **\$500** per full-time term or **\$250** per part-time term with a lifetime maximum of **\$4,000** awarded per student.

- The House includes **\$1 million** for the I-95 and I-10 High Tech Corridors, as well as **\$500,000** for the Advance Power Systems program at Florida State University; the Senate does not include any of these items at this time.

With these recommendations, the BOR aims to untie the dollar amount of the scholarship from the amount of tuition and required fees. This would give universities more flexibility in setting their tuition, thereby helping them to keep up with the rising costs of education. Also, the last two changes would bring an estimated savings of **\$34.7 million**. This money would be transferred to need-based aid and used to help Bright Futures recipients as well as other students who demonstrate financial need.

*Source: Board of Regents, Department of Planning, Budgeting and Policy Analysis*

**HB 611**, Telecommunications Network Access Services, by Representative **Mike Haridopolos** (R-Melbourne), restructures the rate requirements for telecommunications network access services. Under this bill, local exchange telecommunications companies (LECs) with between 100,000 and 3 million access lines would be required to lower intrastate switched access rates to equal the rates of the largest LEC in Florida. Also, interexchange carriers (IXCs) whose intrastate switched access rates are lowered by this action must lower their intrastate long distance rates and give back to their customers the benefits. The result would be a reduction in revenues from charges of approximately **\$76 to \$101 million**, the Public Service Commission estimates. This in turn lowers the gross receipts tax and state sales tax revenues, which fund the Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) trust fund. The House Committee on Utilities & Telecommunications will hear the bill on Tuesday, March 20.

**SB 1190**, by Senator **Don Sullivan** (R- St. Petersburg), would make St. Petersburg Junior College "St. Petersburg College and University Center." The newly designated center would grant select baccalaureate degrees upon accreditation, while maintaining its community college level programs. The "university center" would serve one of the most densely populated areas in the state, targeting students who are working full time. The Senate Education Committee will hear the bill on Tuesday, March 20.

