

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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Several important bills and issues were debated last week, the third of the 2001 Session. The Republican-led House approved **Governor Jeb Bush's** "Service First" plan for overhauling the state employment system. **House Bill 369** would reclassify 16,000 Career Service workers into Selected Exempt Service status, which allows agency managers to use "sound discretion" in disciplining or firing an employee. Leon County's legislative delegation - Representatives **Ausley** (D), **Kendrick** (D), **Kilmer** (R), and **Richardson** (D), - voted against this 200-page bill, but it was sent to the Senate on a 74-43 vote.

Another of the Governor's priority bills, **House Bill 367**, passed the House 65-50. This bill would give the Governor the authority to choose Florida's trial and appeal judges, as well as the people who screen judicial candidates. Currently, boards screen applicants for judicial appointments in Florida's 20 judicial circuits, five District Courts of Appeal, and the state Supreme Court. These boards are made up of nine volunteers; three are appointed by the Governor and three by the Florida Bar, and those six then choose the remaining three members. Under **HB 367**, the Governor would appoint all nine members of these boards.

The Education Governance bills will be heard this week in the Senate Education Committee and the House Colleges and Universities Committee. These bills propose the Board of Regents be replaced by individual, Governor-appointed boards of trustees on July 1, 2001, a date that is two years earlier than was suggested in the original 2000 legislation (see **related story**). In other education-related news, the House gave final approval last Thursday to a bill that would enable students in overcrowded public schools to transfer to private schools with state-paid tuition vouchers (see **Spotlight on Bills**).

The state-budget bills passed the full funding committees in the House and Senate late last week and will be heard late this week in both chambers (see **related story**).

This **Thursday, March 29**, is FSU Day at the Capitol. It'll be a day of displays, entertainment, and "old-fashioned" Garnet and Gold festivity. The theme will be our sesquicentennial. Please join us, if you can, from 10:00 until 2:00 on Thursday.

As always, I welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. I can be reached at 644-4453, or by e-mail at kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu.

Kathleen

BUDGET NEWS

The Senate and House budget committees passed their versions of the **\$50 billion** state funding plan late last week. These proposals will be heard in their respective Chambers later this week and then sent to conference committees by next week. There are differences between the two budgets but both set aside the bulk of the state's dollars for education and health and human services programs. The Senate dedicates **\$14.8 billion** for education while the House allocates **\$15.5 billion**.

The biggest difference between the two plans is **\$350 million** in the Senate's overall budget that is not included in the House spending plan. (The Senate decided not to cut taxes this year while the House offers more than **\$300 million** in tax exemptions.) Major differences appear in the university budgets as well; a significant one is that the Senate's bill requires hundreds of professors to teach an extra class, which creates a **\$43.7 million** disparity between the House and Senate spending plans. One other major spending difference between the budgets is their enrollment funding proposals. The Senate's plan would not reimburse universities who enroll more students than projected. That proposal could result in an overall **\$40 million** reduction to the ten state universities.

SESSION SCHEDULE March 26 - 30

Senate

Tuesday, March 27 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Thursday, March 29 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (for budget)
Friday, March 30 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
(if needed to complete the budget)

House

Friday, March 30 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
(2nd reading of appropriation bills)

Quote of the Week

"This bill is a solution in search of a problem."

- Representative Curtis Richardson (D-Tallahassee) during debate of the "Service First" legislation, which passed the House on Thursday.

Tallahassee Democrat, March 23, 2001

Spotlight on Bills

SB 1750, Emerging and Strategic Technologies, by Senator **Ron Klein** (D-Delray Beach), is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Commerce and Economic Opportunities Committee this week. This bill allows researchers at post-secondary institutions to patent their developments. It also requires the State Board of Education to draw up guidelines permitting university employees who are developing new technologies to contract with businesses that may already have contracts with their university. The guidelines would outline potential conflicts of interest. A similar House bill, **HB 1539**, has been introduced and is awaiting further action.

SB 2054, University Building Naming, by Senator **Jim Sebesta** (R-St. Petersburg), was introduced last week. This bill designates the names of various facilities at SUS universities. FSU has two facilities listed in the bill: the

Women's Soccer and Softball Complex, which is to be named the "Mary Ann Stiles and Barry Smith Team Building," and the Molecular Biophysics Building, which will be named the "Kasha Laboratory." The House companion, **HB 989**, is scheduled to be heard by the State Administration Committee tomorrow.

CS/SB 986, New College/Sarasota/USF, by Senator **Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg), passed the Senate Education Committee last week as a committee substitute. The bill creates an 11th state university - New College, located in Sarasota County - and makes the Sarasota/Manatee campus of USF fiscally autonomous. It also directs New College to seek individual accreditation. The university will be governed by a campus board that will be appointed by the USF Board of Trustees upon recommendation of the USF president. **SB 986** will be heard in the Education Appropriations Subcommittee later this week.

EDUCATION REORGANIZATION

Legislation that intends to give students seamless access to education while holding them accountable for their own success will be heard in both the House and the Senate this week. **Senate Bill 2108**, sponsored by Senator **Ken Pruitt** (R-Port St. Lucie) will be heard today in the Senate Education Committee. Several amendments offered by the SUS will be debated. **House Bill 1533**, by Representative **Evelyn Lynn** (R-Ormond Beach) will be heard Wednesday afternoon in the House Colleges and Universities Committee. Again, SUS amendments are expected. The proposed reforms, among the most anticipated by the state universities during this session, would ultimately affect all students, parents, and faculty in Florida.

By July 1, a new seven-member, Governor-appointed state Board of Education would take responsibility for all state-related education,

from kindergarten through graduate school. These bills would eliminate the Board of Regents on July 1 and make provisions for a Governor-appointed nine- to eleven-member board of trustees for each university. These bills would also allow the trustees to determine when they are ready to begin setting policy. This new framework would spur major changes in everything from the creation of academic programs to the hiring of presidents. In its current form, this legislation would leave many critical administrative details to be worked out, even into the next legislative session.

Among the differences between the House and Senate bills, the House bill increases the size of the proposed university boards from nine to 11 and contains a provision that would allow for presidential searches to be conducted outside of the Sunshine Law.

UPDATES

HB 271, Corporate Income Tax, by the Council for Lifelong Learning and Representative **Joe Negron** (R-Stuart), passed the full House and was referred to the Senate Committees on Education, Finance and Taxation, and Appropriations.

HB 611, Telecommunications Network Access Services, by Representative **Mike Haridopolos** (R-Melbourne) was temporarily postponed by the House Committee on Utilities & Telecommunications in its March 20th meeting. The bill is scheduled to be reconsidered by the committee on Monday, March 26. (This bill would have a negative impact on PECO funds.)

SB 746, Math & Science Teacher Education, by Senator **Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg), unanimously passed the Senate Subcommittee on Education last week and is now awaiting a hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 1190, St. Petersburg Junior College, by Senator **Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg), passed the Senate Education Committee last week. With this bill, St. Petersburg Junior College would become "St. Petersburg College and University Center." The bill will next be heard by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.



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