

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Volume Eleven / Number Eight • April 23, 2001

Major session issues moved along during the seventh week of the regular 2001 Session. The Education Reorganization bills cleared their final committee hurdles last week and will now go to the full chambers for hearings this week. The bills are starting to move in the same direction on many issues, although some major differences still exist between the two proposals. (See related story).

The saga of the budget continues. While the Senate appointed their conferees last Wednesday, the House has yet to name their budget negotiators. The budget is the only bill legislators must pass before the the new fiscal year starts on July 1, 2001. Since the Senate is hosting the bill this year, they have called conference meetings for tonight and tomorrow night, with or without the House! (See Budget Update). Senate President John McKay (R-Bradenton, FSU Alum) has indicated that because of this budget impasse, the 2001 Legislative Session will most likely run into overtime.

Proposals to allow prayer in public schools, the storage of untreated water in underground tanks, and revisions to the way the state chooses their judges all moved toward final passage by the Legislature last week. A bill amending the Bright Futures Scholarship program has support by the Speaker of the House, but has stalled in the Senate (see Spotlight on Bills).

Both the House and the Senate have wrapped-up their committee hearings for the session. Legislative action now moves to the full House and Senate. You can watch your favorite issues and debates on WFSU, the Florida Channel, which can be found on local cable channel 6, Monday - Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

As always, I welcome your comments and input during the remainder of this nine week session. Please feel free to contact me at 644-4453 or by e-mail at kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu with any questions or requests you might have.

Kathleen

BUDGET NEWS

Although budget negotiations between the Florida House and Senate have stalled, the Senate appointed its conferees last week and will have its first conference committee meeting tonight. The House, meanwhile, has not yet appointed its conferees.

Senate President John McKay (R-Bradenton, FSU Alum) and House Speaker Tom Feeney (R-Orlando) are at an impasse over tax exemptions. The House version of the budget includes \$350 million in cuts on the intangibles tax, as well as continuation of the week-long "sales tax holiday" that for the last few years has been held in August, before the start of the school year. The Senate, on the other hand, does not include these exemptions in their budget. Last week, Senator McKay proposed a compromise to the House that uses revenue from the state's trust fund on tobacco settlements to provide \$49 million in tax breaks. Speaker Feeney rejected this overture as insufficient. It is very likely that this budget impasse will force the Legislature to labor beyond its scheduled closing date of May 4th.

Senate Education Budget conferees:

- Senator Don Sullivan, Chair (R-St. Petersburg)
- Senator Buddy Dyer (D-Orlando)
- Senator Rudy Garcia (R-Miami)
- Senator Betty Holzendorf (D-Jacksonville)
- Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater)
- Senator Les Miller (D-Tampa) (continued)

Quote of the Week

"We'll have one week to craft a budget. That's going to be a heck of a challenge. (But) I'm always an optimist."

Senate President John McKay (R - Bradenton, FSU Alum) commenting on the budget impasse with the House.

*Tallahassee Democrat,
Saturday, April 21, 2001*

SESSION SCHEDULE April 23 - 27

House		Senate	
Tuesday, April 24	1:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Wednesday, April 25	9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 25	10:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Thursday, April 26	9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, April 26	10:30 a.m. - 3:00 pm.	Friday, April 27	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Spotlight on Bills

HB 459, Public Officials/Relative Employment by **Representative Phillip Brutus** (D-Miami), would prevent public education officials from “appointing, employing, promoting or advancing a relative within the university, community college district or district school board.” The bill was scheduled to be heard on April 6 by the House Education Innovation Committee but was not considered. The committee will not meet again. There is no Senate companion bill.

SB 1190, St. Petersburg Junior College by **Senator Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg) has now become a train. In addition to redesignating the St. Petersburg Junior College as St. Petersburg College & University Center, the bill now contains the substantive language from several other bills, including:

CS/SB 986, New College/Sarasota/USF by **Senator Don Sullivan** (R-St. Petersburg) which makes New College the 11th state university; **SB 1626**, Community College/Program Approval, by **Senator Ken Pruitt** (R- Port St. Lucie), which would allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in selected areas of “high need.”

(continued)

- **Senator Daniel Webster** (R- Orlando)

At Large:

- **Senator Jim Horne** (R- Orange Park, FSU Alum)

- **Senator Tom Rossin** (D-West Palm Beach)

Education Governance

Both the House and Senate versions of the Education Governance legislation passed their final committee hurdles last week. **HB 1533**, by **Representative Evelyn Lynn** (R-Ormond Beach), and **SB 2108**, by **Senator Jim Horne** (R-Orange Park, FSU Alum) will be heard by the full House and the full Senate this week. Both bills would place all public education, from kindergarten through graduate school, under a statewide Board of Education that would be appointed by the Governor. The bills would also replace the Board of Regents with University Boards of Trustees (UBOTs), which would also be appointed by the Governor. In addition, each bill contains a provision that would tie 10 percent of a university’s budget to meeting as-yet-unwritten performance standards. Also, both bills cur-

The same language from the above bills was also added to **SB 2108**, Education Governance by **Senator Ken Pruitt** (R- Port St. Lucie), which is on second reading in the Senate.

CS/CS/SB 1509, Student Financial Assistance by **Representative Mario Diaz-Balart** (R-Miami), was unanimously approved by the House Council for Lifelong Learning last week. The bill revises the eligibility requirements for and calculations of Bright Futures Scholarships. In addition, the bill carries incentives for recipients to graduate in three years instead of four. Beginning in 2002, Academic and Merit Scholars will complete CLEP, AP or IB tests in English, Math, Natural Science, Social Science and the Humanities in an effort to test out of required courses, thereby earning a degree earlier. The House estimates the “degree in three” initiative will generate a savings of **\$5,000** per student per year, or **\$32,000** total per year. There is no Senate companion at this time.

HB 1535, Public Records/Education Professionals by **Representative Evelyn Lynn** (R- Ormond Beach), allows a public records exemption for information on persons applying for Education

rently provide for a Chief Transition Officer - or a Secretary from the Florida Board of Education - to assume responsibility for the implementation of reorganization. Both of these bills, in their current state, also contain an indirect cost “fix” and mandate Senate confirmation for each UBOT.

Areas in which the House and Senate versions of this legislation remain divided include:

- the Senate allows additional authority to the UBOTs on: tuition flexibility, policies relating to information technology resources, and for direct support organizations.

- the Senate’s version (but not the House’s) clarifies language regarding the intended transition of universities by July 2002 from state-agency status to non-state-agency status.

- the Senate does not include a cap on certain fees that are currently included in **HB 1533**.

Commissioner, president of state university, or president of public community college. It also makes it a first-degree misdemeanor for anyone except the applicant to release said information. Although the bill was referred to the House Colleges and Universities Committee on March 26, the committee has not heard it and will not meet again. The Senate companion, **SB 894** by **Senator Rudy Garcia** (R-Hialeah), was reported out of the Senate Governmental Oversight and Productivity Committee as a committee substitute.

SB 1972, General Bill relating to Charter Schools by **Senator Durell Peaden** (R- Crestview), sets guidelines for schools converting to charter schools, removes the cap on how many charter schools can be established in any one school district, and allows charter school students to participate in extra-curricular activities at their local public school. The bill is scheduled to be heard on Tuesday by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.

SB 2054, Designations/University Buildings by **Senator Jim Sebesta** (R- St. Petersburg), was withdrawn from the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and is ready for a hearing by the full Senate. The House bill, **HB 989** by **Representative David Mealor** (R- Lake Mary), is still on the House Special Order Calendar.

