

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Volume Twelve / Number Five • February 18, 2002

The tax reform discussion was replaced by a property tax increase proposal during the fourth week of the regular legislative session.

Chairman of the Senate Education Appropriations Committee, **Senator Don Sullivan, (R - St. Petersburg)**, rejected his own budget last week, stating that his committee needed more money to spend on education (**see related story**). He urged Senate leadership to consider adopting a proposal to allow the raising of local property taxes by 0.8 mills to fund education needs in Florida.

President D'Alemberte testified before the panel, and expressed his concern over the Senate Education budget. He stated that if the budget were to pass in its current form, he would have to stop admitting students at FSU for this year.

Senate President John McKay (R-Bradenton, FSU Alum) is considering Sullivan's tax proposal. Meanwhile, House Speaker Tom Feeney stated last week that he does not support raising taxes, nor does he support reforming them. Consequently, the education budget process has stalled, at least for today.

Governor Bush held a press conference last Thursday announcing his \$100 million initiative for high technology, which is intended to benefit the state university system (**see Spotlight on Bills**). As a show of support for this initiative, most of the SUS Presidents attended the press conference, including President D'Alemberte.

The Senate Education Committee will meet this afternoon to confirm the appointments of Secretary of Education Jim Horne and FBOE members T. Willard Fair, Julia Johnson and Phil Handy. In a meeting last week, the panel confirmed FBOE members Charles Garcia, William Proctor, Linda Eades and Carolyn Roberts. Our own University Trustees will be confirmed by this same committee next week (**see related story**).

Tune in to the Florida Channel- locally on cable channel 6 - to catch live coverage of all the exciting legislative action, broadcast daily, gavel-to-gavel, from 8:00 am to 6:00 PM.

As always, feel free to contact me if you have questions about issues that may concern you. I can be reached at **(850) 644-4453** or by e-mail at **kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu**. You can also find a variety of legislative information, including bill text, calendars, and bill history on the Internet. The Florida Legislature's home page, On Line Sunshine, can be found at **www.leg.state.fl.us**.

Kathleen

State Budget Update

Both the House and the Senate education appropriations committees presented their budgets last week. At this early juncture, the House is recommending a 7.86 percent increase in base funding for the university system, the Senate, a 5.49 percent increase. The Senate, however, did not advance their spending plan to the full appropriations committee for review, citing a lack of funding available for education spending. Both House and Senate subcommittees are expected to meet again this week, and the House plan is expected to advance to the full committee. Below is a comparison of the two budgets, as of today:

- **Enrollment Growth:** The **Senate** provides \$54.5 million for 8,728 additional FTE, system-wide. The **House** provides \$78.9 million for 10,532 additional FTE.
- **Tuition Increase:** Both the **Senate** and the **House** include a 5 percent across-the-board tuition increase. Each also includes a differential increase of up to 10 percent for out-of-state and graduate students. The money raised would come back to each campus and at this time, is not designated by the Legislature for a specific purpose.
- **FSU Medical School:** The **House** funds the full roll-out amount requested, \$5.2 million in recurring general revenue, plus the tuition and fees. The **Senate** funds 25 percent of the request, \$1.3 million.
- **Public Broadcasting:** The Senate included no new dollars for the statewide public broadcasting stations. The House includes \$2.9 million.
- **Major Gifts:** Neither budget funds the major gifts program.
- **Discretionary Funding:** The **House** provides \$23.1 million in discretionary funding for the universities, the **Senate** provides \$0.

Governor's Technology Initiative

Governor Bush held a press conference last week to announce his \$100 million technology initiative, which will greatly benefit the university system. The proposed committee bill creates centers of excellence in collaboration with the state university system and the private high technology industry. At this point, neither the House nor the Senate funds the initiative.

SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE

Wednesday, February 20, 2002
9:00 - 11:15 AM

Thursday, February 21, 2002
1:30 - 3:30 PM

HOUSE

Wednesday, February 20, 2002
10:15 AM - 6:00 PM

Spotlight on Bills

HB 443, Fire Safety Standards by Representative Gustavo Barreiro (R-Miami) gives the power to adopt uniform fire safety standards for educational facilities to the State Fire Marshal. This authority currently resides with the Commissioner of Education. The university opposes this bill because it fragments the safety compliance process, blocks the voice of those entities affected most by the standards, and will be difficult to administer. The bill has passed all three of its committees of reference and next goes to the House floor. The identical Senate bill, **SB 532 by Senator Ron Silver (D-North Miami)**, will be heard today in the Senate Education Committee.

CS/HB 505, Law Enforcement/Consolidation/FDLE by Representative Mitch Needelman (R-Palm Bay) passed the House Committee on State Administration last week as a committee substitute. The bill creates a five-member task force to study the effects of consolidating state law enforcement under one agency. The task force must report to the Legislature no

later than 1 month before the 2003 legislative session begins. A similar bill in the Senate, **SB 1404 by Senator Howard Futch (R-Indialantic)**, was temporarily postponed in the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Productivity.

HB 1241, Education and Training/State Employees by Representative Lorraine Ausley (D-Tallahassee) passed the House Colleges and Universities Committee last Thursday. The bill grants tuition waivers to state employees, excluding university employees, for work-related courses. The bill will be heard next by the Council for Lifelong Learning.

HB 871, Meningitis Immunization/Schools by Representative Mike Hogan (R-Jacksonville), would require college students who live on-campus to be vaccinated for meningococcal meningitis. The bill is scheduled to be heard this week in the House Colleges and Universities Committee. A similar bill, **CS/SB 1628 by Senator Ken Pruitt (R-Port St. Lucie)**, passed the Health Aging and

Long Term Care Committee last week and will next be heard in the Senate Education Committee.

TRUSTEE CONFIRMATION INFORMATION

On Monday, February 25, every member of the university boards of trustees will be confirmed by the Senate Education Committee, which is chaired by **Senator Alex Villalobos (Republican - Miami; FSU alum)**. The committee will use the confirmation by exception method, and will not require every trustee to be present.

Each member of the Senate committee will receive in advance, a list of all 143 university trustees, for their review. The trustees will be grouped by university, and confirmed in that way. If a member of the Senate committee has a question of a specific trustee, that trustee will be called upon to appear before the committee. This information may be learned in advanced, or it may arise during the confirmation process. The committee staff will notify us of further instructions, should that be necessary.