

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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With three weeks left in the regular nine-week session, there is a clear realization that legislators will not complete their heavy agenda of tax reform, crafting a budget, and redrawing district lines.

The House has a budget that is ready for the conference process, but the Senate is still looking for ways to fund the state's education needs (**see related story**). On Friday, March 8, the state Revenue Estimating Conference will release its report on the latest available revenues, which are expected to increase. This news may jump-start the stalled budget process. The budget is the only bill the Legislature is constitutionally required to pass.

Each chambers' university governance/reorganization bills will be heard this week in their respective education committees. This will be the first opportunity legislators have to publicly discuss these massive bills in their entirety. (The House bill is about 1,100 pages, the Senate 1,600.) At this time, prior to the amendatory process, both bills look favorable toward the major devolution issues.

Reapportionment continues to overshadow the legislative process, and will most likely keep legislators in Tallahassee for a number of months after the scheduled "sine die" on March 22. To that end, too much work and no play can make anyone cranky. To remedy that, please plan to attend **FSU Day at the Capitol** on **Tuesday, March 5**. Many of our Trustees will participate in the festivities, along with several FSU Foundation Board members, administrators, and students. We hope to see an abundance of garnet and gold! As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions about issues that concern you. I can be reached at **(850) 644-4453**, or by e-mail **kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu**.

Kathleen

State Budget Update

Last week, **Senator Don Sullivan (R-St. Petersburg)**, chair of the Senate education budget subcommittee, released a series of amendments to the Senate budget that would pump \$1 billion into Florida's education system. This plan would remove sales tax exemptions for such things as tanning salons, charter fishing boats, and college-stadium skyboxes. Sullivan's amendments passed the full Senate appropriations committee last Thursday. Not coincidentally, lawmakers approved a series of amendments that eliminated their earlier proposal to pay for education by increasing local property taxes. The Senate's newest proposal, called "\$1 Billion for a Better Florida," earmarks \$798 million for K-12, \$30 million for community colleges and \$40 million for state universities. The \$40 million for the SUS will be used to fund additional enrollment growth at each university — **an addition of \$1,515,692 for FSU** — \$5 million for library resources, \$10 million for a high technology research matching program, and \$9.4 million for computer technology infrastructure. No further details were given on these programs or how the money would be divided between each university.

House Republican leaders have already rejected consideration of tax increases this session, saying their budget adequately funds the state's needs. The House passed their spending plan on Friday, with no amendments to the SUS budget.

Join the Fun at the Sixth Annual
FSU Day at the Capitol – Tuesday, March 5th
Displays 10:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m.
Entertainment by Student Performers 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Wear Your Garnet and Gold!

Governor's Initiative Includes New Center For Reading Research

Concerned that students who lack adequate reading skills will suffer in other academic areas, Governor Bush has developed a new reading initiative aimed at helping students become better readers by the year 2012. Included in this initiative is a new \$2.5 million research center at FSU that will focus on the research and development of better teaching methods. Impressed with the work already being done by FSU's Professor Joe Torgeson in this area, the Governor has appointed him to head up the new center. The center will be a collaborative effort between FSU and UCF.

In addition to developing better reading skills, the Governor's initiative includes a teacher certification program and summer institutes for school principals whose students do not have strong reading skills.

SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE

Wednesday, March 6, 2002

12:30 - 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 7, 2002

9:00 a.m. until completion of agenda

HOUSE

Tuesday, March 5, 2002

10:00 a.m. - 12 noon, 1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 6, 2002

1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 7, 2002

10:00 a.m. - 12 noon, 1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Friday, March 8, 2002

1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Spotlight on Bills

HB 7, Florida National Guard Tuition/Residency Sponsored by Representative Carey Baker (R-Eustis), gives residency status to active members of the Florida National Guard for tuition purposes at public community colleges & universities. The bill passed the House last week and was sent to the Senate. The Senate laid the identical bill, **SB 128 by Senator Ken Pruitt (R-Port St. Lucie)**, on the table, took up the House bill and passed it. The bill is on its way to the Governor.

SB 496, Education/Dependent Children/Military Sponsored by Senator Richard Mitchell (D-Jasper, FSU alum), provides educational opportunities at the state's expense for dependent children of military personnel who died or became 100 percent disabled in Operation Enduring Freedom, beginning 10/07/01. The bill passed the Senate last week. In addition, the House companion, **HB 439 by Representative Dwight Stansel (D-Live Oak)**, passed the House on Thursday.

SB 1416, Office of Inspector General by Senator Rudy Garcia (R-Hialeah), cre-

ates the Office of Inspector General within the Office of the Commissioner of Education. The office shall be responsible for promoting accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness and detecting fraud and abuse within school districts, public community colleges, and public universities in this state. The bill is set to be heard in the Senate Governmental Oversight & Productivity on March 5. The identical House bill, **HB 191 by Representative Renier Diaz De La Portilla (R-Miami)**, is available for the House Calendar, on second reading.

HB 933, Public Employee Optional Retirement Program by Representative Marco Rubio (R-Miami), allows employees that are eligible to participate in, but do not participate in, the State University System Optional Retirement Program, to participate in the Public Employee Optional Retirement Program and authorizes the acceptance of rollovers into participants accounts. The bill was voted out of the House Fiscal Responsibility Council last week and is available for the House floor. The Sen-

ate companion **SB 1102 by Senator Debby Sanderson (R-Ft. Lauderdale)**, is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Governmental Oversight Committee on March 5th.

HB 1557, Spaceport Florida Authority by Representative Bob Allen (R-Merritt Island), changes the name of the Spaceport Florida Authority to Florida Space Authority; revises the membership and mission of the Spaceport Management Council and its executive board. The bill is set for a hearing in the Council for Competitive Commerce today. The Senate companion, **SB 688 by Senator Howard Futch (R-Indianapolis)**, is in House Messages.

HB 353, State Universities/Boards of Trustees by Representative Leslie Waters, revises the membership of the state university boards of trustees. The bill is scheduled to be placed on the calendar for final passage in the House today. The Senate bill, **SB 2070 by Senator Don Sullivan (R-St. Petersburg)**, is available for second reading on the Senate floor.