



# LegisLetter

## FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Volume Ten / Number Three • March 15, 2004

If the pace of the 2004 Session to this point had to be described in just one word, it would be “breakneck.” After only two weeks, several major issues are already moving through the process, and a few have even been sent to and signed by the Governor. One such issue is the combined bill creating a School of Chiropractic at Florida State University and an Alzheimer’s Institute at the University of South Florida. Governor Bush signed the legislation into law, which became effective March 11, 2004 except where otherwise provided (**see Spotlight on Bills**).

The proposal that would create “block tuition” at the universities, and impose fiscal penalties for students carrying credit hours over 115 percent of the amount required to graduate in four years, was discussed last week in the House Higher Education Subcommittee. President Wetherell testified largely in favor of the bill, reminding lawmakers that University Trustees should be allowed some discretion in decisions such as this, and to ask that legislators provide plenty of lead-time to implement these policies, should they pass into law. The proposal was heard again this morning in the full House Education Committee (**see related story**).

Lawmakers will begin crafting their budgets in earnest this week, now that the Revenue Estimating Conference determined last Friday that additional revenues would be available (**see related story**). The appropriations subcommittees in both the House and Senate hope to have their budgets ready for a vote by the end of this week, advancing them to the full appropriations committees by the middle of next week.

This week promises to be just as active as last week. You can catch all of the “action,” live and taped, on The Florida Channel, which is available in Leon, Gadsden and Wakulla Counties from midnight to 6:00 pm daily on FSU 4 (Comcast cable channel 4). For scheduling information, see WFSU.org. And, as always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need further information on a bill and its analysis at (850) 644-4453 or [kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu](mailto:kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu).



## Additional Revenue Available

The 2004 General Revenue Estimating Conference met Friday, March 12th, and determined there is \$1.1 billion additional revenue available in the upcoming 2004-05 fiscal year. About half of those funds, however, are coming from one-time sources making it difficult to commit to programs that need recurring dollars, such as enrollment growth at the universities. Lawmakers remain cautiously optimistic about the budgeting process about to begin this week.

“This is not a windfall,” said Senator Ken Pruitt, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. “We must continue to be deliberative while crafting the state budget, and limit the amount of nonrecurring money spent on recurring programs.”

Because of the additional available revenue, Governor Bush plans to submit a supplemental budget to the Legislature later this week, to include funding projects he did not include in his original budget proposal released in January.

## University Funding Policies

The proposed bill requires each university board of trustees, with the approval of the Board of Governors to develop policies and procedures:

- ▶ Ensuring the timely completion of baccalaureate degree programs including charging a surcharge to students that have taken 115% of required courses as well as removing funding from the institution for those students in excess of the 115%. The bill was amended this morning to further define non-degree seeking students and provides exemptions for military personnel and students on state-employee fee waivers.
- ▶ Revising provisions determining the status of a student’s residency for tuition purposes.
- ▶ Establishing a technology fee not to exceed five percent of tuition.
- ▶ Requiring the university to provide a billing statement to each student reflecting the true cost of the student’s education. The bill was amended this morning to allow electronic disbursement.
- ▶ Establishing a block tuition and fee policy.
- ▶ Developing a policy for non-degree seeking students to pay tuition at 100 percent of the full cost of instruction.
- ▶ Revising the Major Gifts Program by raising the threshold for matches, and capping gifts to be matched at \$3 million per year or a maximum of \$15 million to be paid over 5 years.

# Spotlight on Bills

**SB 2002 Health Care Initiatives, by Senator Durell Peaden (R - Crestview)**, creating the FSU Chiropractic Medicine program was passed by both houses of the Legislature and signed by the Governor on Thursday and became effective March 11, 2004 except where otherwise provided and is now Chapter Law 2004-02.

**SB 2512 General Service Charge On General Revenue, by Senator Tom Lee, (R - Bradenton)**, eliminates the general revenue surcharge deducted on revenues raised by local option fuel tax. These funds have been deposited into the University Concurrency Trust Fund and used to fund offsite improvements and cost incurred to update campus master plans. There is no House companion.

**HB 189 Geriatric Specialty Nursing by Representative Frank Farkas (R - St. Petersburg)**, known as the "Clara Ramsey Care of the Elderly Act," requires Agency for Workforce Innovation to establish pilot program for delivery of geriatric nursing education and specifies eligibility requirements for certified nursing assistants to receive said education. The bill will be heard in the Future of Florida's Families Committee this week. The Senate has filed a similar bill, **SB 2170, by Senator Durell Peaden**, which will be heard in the Health, Aging and Long-Term Care committee early this week.

**SB 1588 Specialty License Plates by Senator Lee Constantine (R - Altamonte Springs)**, increases the number of automobile owners that must indicate that they intend to purchase a specialty plate and increases the number of plates that must be sold to prevent the plate from being discontinued. The bill was heard and amended by the Transportation Committee last week and is now in the Finance and Taxation Committee. There is a similar bill in the House, **HB 1049 by the House Committee on Transportation**.

**SB 1464 Patient Safety, by the Senate Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care**, requires the FSU College of Medicine to study the return on investment by hospitals from implementing computerized physician order entry and other information technologies relating to patient safety. The bill will be heard this week in the Senate committee.

**SB 1924 Tax/College Football Team Facility, by Senator Gwen Margolis (D - Miami Beach)**, provides that any publicly owned football facility that houses a college football team and has been declared in a state of financial emergency, may retain the proceeds of sales taxes generated by the facility, its concessionaires, ticket sales, merchandising, etc. for renovating and modernizing the facility. The House has filed a similar bill, **HB 999 by Representative Manuel Prieguez (R - Miami)**.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

### SENATE

Tuesday, March 16  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Thursday, March 18  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

### HOUSE

Tuesday, March 16  
9:50 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 18  
9:50 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



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