



Volume **23** | Number **3** | January 25, 2016

**A**lthough the 2016 Legislative Session was only into its second week last week, the Capitol was unusually hectic for so early into the nine-week session. Two legislative-leadership bills were signed into law just nine day after the start, thereby demonstrating how productive and cooperative the legislative branches intend to be this session.

A bill that will set statewide water policy, a priority of House Speaker Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island), and a bill that creates educational and job opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, a priority of Senate President Andy Gardiner (R-Orlando), passed through both chambers of the legislature during the first week of session.

In addition to these important bills, others are also moving rapidly through their respective committees, including a bill that will require universities to accept high school computer-coding classes as foreign language credit, and proposals that revamp the state-employee benefits package.

A bill that would remove the statutory ban on firearms on college and university campuses may have stalled in the Senate for this session. The Senate Judiciary Committee Chair, Sen. Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R-Miami), announced last week that his committee will not hear **Senate Bill 68**. The full chamber will most likely hear the House companion bill sometime soon. For additional information, please see the **Spotlight on Bills** section of this newsletter.

Also last week, economic forecasters reduced their earlier revenue estimates for FY 2016-2017 by nearly \$400 million – news that came out just as House and the Senate leaders were getting ready to release a first run of their respective budgets. Those initial drafts will be out later this week, and a **related story** provides additional information on the budgeting process.

Legislative activities can be followed live each day on The Florida Channel, local cable channel 4.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns, or for copies of bills and their analysis. I can be reached at **(850) 644-4453** or **kdaly@fsu.edu**.

*Kathleen*

# Budget Process Begins

State economic forecasters last week revised their earlier revenue projections downward, just as the budgeting process was set to begin in earnest.

With tax revenues lagging over the next 18 months, and the need for other slight adjustments to the budget, the legislature will be working with roughly \$400 million less than economists forecast them to have back in October.

While this news was a bit unexpected, and \$400 million is no small amount, the state's overall income will still

increase by \$1.2 billion in FY 2016-2017, compared to the current fiscal year.

Legislative leaders expressed caution about the new revenue projections but may still explore a scaled-back version of Governor Scott's suggested \$1 billion tax-exemption package.

With the new, lower revenue projections also comes the real possibility that the revenues used to fund the education budget will also be lowered. House and Senate appropriators plan to distribute a first look at their respective spending plans later this week, along with budget conforming and implementing language.

Calendars already show both House and Senate full appropriations committees will hear, amend and vote out their respective proposed budgets on February 3. The full House hopes to pass their spending plan on February 10, which is the fifth week of the nine-week session.

## SPOTLIGHT ON **BILLS**

**PCB HHSC 16-01 – State Employee Group Health Plan by Representative Jason Brodeur (R – Sanford)**, adds new products and services to the program by giving the Department of Management Services (DMS) broad authority to contract for a wide variety of additional products and services. Employees will be able to purchase new products as optional benefits. DMS is directed to contract with at least one entity that provides comprehensive pricing and inclusive services for surgery and other types of medical procedures. The contract requires cost savings to the program, which will be shared by the state and the enrollee.

Beginning in 2017, DMS is directed to contract with at least one entity that

provides online health care price and quality information, including the average price paid for health care services and providers by county. The contract requires the entity to allow enrollees to shop for health care using the information provided to select higher quality, lower cost services and providers. The contract also requires the entity to identify any savings realized by the enrollee, and share those savings with the enrollee.

Beginning in the **2019** plan year, the bill provides that state employees will have health plan choices at four different benefit levels. If the state's contribution for premium is more than the cost of the plan selected by the employee, then the employee may use the remainder to:

- Fund a flexible spending arrangement or a health savings account.
- Purchase additional benefits offered through the state group insurance program.
- Increase the employee's salary.

The bill directs DMS to hire an independent benefits consultant (IBC). The IBC will assist DMS in developing a plan for the implementation of the new benefit levels in the program. The plan shall be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than January 1, 2018. The IBC will also provide ongoing assessments and analysis for the program.

The bill directs DMS to recommend employee contribution rates for standard plans and high deductible health plans for the 2017 plan year reflecting the actuarial benefit difference between the HMO and the PPO plans for both self-insured and fully insured products. The proposed enrollee premium rates for the 2017 plan year must be submitted to the Legislative Budget Commission (LBC) for review and approval. If the LBC does not approve the proposed rates, the rates provided in the 2016-17 General Appropriations Act will apply.

The proposed bill was workshopped in the Health Human Services Committee last week and submitted as a committee bill. A similar bill in the Senate, **SB 1434 by Senator Jeff Brandes (R – St. Petersburg)** has been referred to the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee, the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, and the Appropriations Committee.

**HB 1309 – Sexual Offenses by Postsecondary Students by Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda (D – Tallahassee)**, requires that law enforcement agencies report certain sexual offenses involving postsecondary students to designated officials at the postsecondary institution.

Additionally, the bill requires specified postsecondary institutions to require that information on sexual assault be included in course syllabi. The bill is waiting to be heard in the Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee. The identical bill in the Senate, **SB 1702 by Senator Maria Sachs (D – Delray Beach)** has been referred to Criminal Justice, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice and the Appropriations Committee.

**HB 1143 – Florida Clean Indoor Air Act by Representative Shawn Harrison (R – Tampa)** amends the Florida Clean Indoor Air Act to prohibit the use of nicotine dispensing devices in enclosed indoor workplaces. Specifically, the bill amends the definition of “smoking” to include, inhaling, exhaling, carrying, or possessing a nicotine-dispensing device. The bill reported favorably in the Health Quality Subcommittee last week and is waiting to be heard in the Business and Professions Subcommittee. There is no Senate companion at this time.

**HB 305 – Procurement Procedures by Educational Institutions by Representative Brad Drake (R – Marianna)**, authorizes district school boards, Florida College System institutions, and universities to make purchases through an online procurement system, an electronic auction service, or other efficient procurement tool. The bill reported favorable in the Education Appropriations Subcommittee and is awaiting a hearing in the State Affairs Committee. The Senate companion, **SB 350 by Senator Bill Montford (D – Tallahassee, FSU Alum)** is waiting to be heard in the Appropriations Committee.

**SB 1638 -- Postsecondary Education for Veterans by Senator Tom Lee (R – Brandon)**, directs the Department of Education to award postsecondary course credit for specified examinations and tests. Additionally, the bill provides that specified programs and test scores meet certain educator certification requirements. The bill is scheduled for hearing in the Higher Education Subcommittee today. The identical bill in the House, **HB 1157 by Rep-**

**resentative Jake Raburn (R – Valrico)** is on the agenda today in the Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee.

**HB 213 – State Employee Salaries by Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, (D – Tallahassee)**, creates the “State Employee Fairness Act” and provides a 7% competitive pay increase effective July 1, 2016 based on the employee’s June 30, 2016, base rate of pay. The bill is waiting to be heard in the Governmental Operations Subcommittee. A similar bill in the Senate, **SB 478 by Senator Arthenia Joyner (D – Tampa)** has been referred to the Governmental Oversight and Accountability, the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government and the Appropriations Committee.

**SB 198 – Sales Tax Holiday by Senator Dorothy Hukill (R – Port Orange)**, establishes a 10-day sales tax holiday beginning August 5, 2016, and ending August 14, 2016. During the holiday, specific purchases of clothing, school supplies, and personal computers are exempt from the state sales and use tax and county discretionary sales surtaxes. It is estimated that the bill will reduce General Revenue receipts by \$56.1 million and local government revenues by \$12.6 million in fiscal year 2016-2017. The bill is waiting to be heard in the Appropriations Committee. There is no House companion at this time.

## UPDATE ON BILLS

### COMPUTER CODING

This week, the House K-12 Subcommittee substantially amended and

passed **HB 887**, Computer Coding Instruction by **Representative Janet Adkins (R – Fernandina Beach)**. Among other things, the amended bill requires the Higher Education Coordinating Council to develop recommendations that identify high school courses in computer science, including computer coding and computer programming, which may be used to satisfy state university admissions requirements for foreign language, math, and science. The bill has two remaining committees of

reference. **SB 468**, by **Senator Jeremy Ring (D – Margate)**, is awaiting a hearing in its final committee. That version requires Florida College System institutions and state universities to recognize computer coding course credits as foreign language credits.

## GUNS ON CAMPUS

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman **Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R –**

**Miami)** confirmed this week that he will not hear **SB 68, Licenses to Carry Concealed Weapons or Firearms by Senator Greg Evers (R – Pensacola)**, in his committee this legislative session. The Judiciary Committee was the next scheduled stop for the bill. The House companion, **HB 4001 by Representative Greg Steube (R – Sarasota)**, has cleared all committees and is on the calendar for a hearing on the House floor.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

### SENATE SESSION

THURSDAY, **JANUARY 28**, 1:30 p.m.  
to 3:30 p.m.

### HOUSE SESSION

TUESDAY, **JANUARY 26**, 2:30 p.m.  
until completion  
WEDNESDAY, **JANUARY 27**, 3:30 p.m.  
until completion



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