

CAPITOL UPDATE

WEEK 1 MARCH 3 – MARCH 6, 2009

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2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SETS SAIL AMID ECONOMIC STORM

The 111th regular session of the Florida Legislature was gavelled to order on Tuesday morning, March 3, under a cloud of economic difficulties that will impact every decision over the next 60 days.

The House of Representatives began their organizational meeting by electing Representative Larry Cretul (R - Ocala) as Speaker of the House for the 2009 - 2010 term of office. He replaces Representative Ray Sansom, who resigned his post.

Speaker Cretul gave brief remarks following his installation acknowledging the state's fiscal constraints, announcing, "The state of the state is that we need to be concerned. And we need to be braced for some

unpopular decisions."

Representative Ron Reagan (R - Bradenton), a member of the Hillsborough Legislative Delegation, was elected Speaker Pro Tempore.

In the Senate, President Jeff Atwater (R - Palm Beach County) cautioned members that all spending would be put under a microscope, stating, "if it doesn't house, teach, feed protect, heal or create a job for a Floridian, this is the time to end it."

[Video of the opening session of the House](#)

[Video of the opening session of the Senate](#)

[Text of President Atwater's remarks](#)



House Speaker Larry Cretul

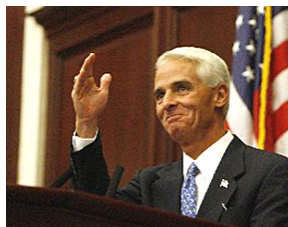


Senate President Jeff Atwater

DID YOU KNOW...

- Florida's First Legislative Council, which was supposed to meet in Pensacola on June 10, 1822, did not meet until 44 days later due to hazardous and time-consuming travel?

GOVERNOR CRIST DELIVER'S ANNUAL STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS



Governor Charlie Crist

Florida Governor Charlie Crist delivered his third state of the

state address to a joint session of the Florida Legislature Tuesday evening. In an unusually short speech, the Governor outlined his priorities for the session, along with major provisions of his proposed \$66.5 billion budget. He encouraged House and Senate members to accept the use of \$12.2 billion

in federal stimulus dollars over three years to lessen the impact of further budget reductions, and to access over \$200 million by ratifying the Seminole Gaming Compact.

[Video and text of Governor Crist's state of the state address](#)

EARLY FOCUS ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

Two important traffic safety measures strongly supported by the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners and sponsored by two members of the Hillsborough Legislative Delegation, passed their first committees of reference on Wednesday in the House Roads, Bridges & Ports Policy Council.

[HB 439](#) by Representative Ron Reagan (R - Bradenton) authorizes the use of red

light camera by counties and municipalities. The bill has three more committee stops in the House. Its Senate companion, [SB 2004](#) by Senator Thad Altman (R - Brevard County), has been filed and is awaiting committee references.

[HB 1](#) by Representative Rich Glorioso (R - Plant City) requires primary enforcement of Florida's seat belt laws. The bill is named in part for

Katie Marchetti, who was killed in a tragic traffic incident in Hillsborough County. Her parents, Laura and Vin Marchetti, testified in support of Representative Glorioso's bill, and told Katie's story.

The bill's Senate counterpart, [SB 344](#) by Senator Nan Rich (D - Broward County) is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Transportation Committee.



Florida's Current Capitol Under Construction in the 1970's

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING BILL STARTS STRONG

A comprehensive prescription drug monitoring system has been in development for months, bringing together a wide array of interested parties, including Hillsborough County Government, to fight what has become a major public health and safety hazard.

Florida has become a haven for illegally exporting large quantities of prescription

medication to states that already monitor drug distribution.

Senator Mike Fasano (R - Pasco County) presented [SB 462](#) and its accompanying public records exemption, [SB 440](#), to the Senate Health Regulation Committee on Wednesday. The bill would create a tracking system to fight doctor shopping, stop the over prescribing of medi-

cation, and regulate pain management clinics that are major suppliers of these drugs. SB's 462 and 440 passed by a unanimous vote, and will now move on to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Its House companions, [HB's 1015](#) and [1017](#) by Representative Kurt Kelly (R - Ocala), have been filed and are awaiting committee assignments.



The Historic and New Capitol as Seen Today

BUDGET BUILDING AND REVIEWING SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS

The only constitutionally mandated duty of the Florida Legislature is the crafting and passage of an annual state budget. In today's harsh economic environment, legislators will be even more focused on passing a balanced spending package.

The state's Revenue Estimating Conference will convene

next week to provide an updated estimate of revenue collections. It is possible that the Legislature may have to make further reductions to the current budget, in addition to fresh cuts of up to \$5 billion in the FY 2010 budget. Such decisions will be affected by the amount of federal economic stimulus dol-

lars and/or Seminole Gaming Compact revenues applied to the budget.

The Florida House Finance and Tax Council has undertaken a detailed review and analysis of current sales tax exemptions to see which should be maintained, and which could be eliminated.

To learn more about a particular bill, the budget, or members of the Florida Legislature, visit *Online Sunshine* at: www.leg.state.fl.us

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**WELCOME
TIFFANY
HILTON**

Hillsborough County's Office of Public Affairs is pleased to introduce and welcome University of South Florida student Tiffany Hilton from Brandon, FL, as an intern for the legislative session. She is a senior majoring in both criminology and sociology. Tiffany plans on pursuing a law degree with an emphasis in criminal justice.

Ms. Hilton is the fourth intern placed with Hillsborough County as part of USF's highly-regarded Legislative Internship Program, which is being duplicated by other universities throughout the state.

**BUDGET BUILDING AND REVIEWING
SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS (CONTINUED)**

[Governor Crist's proposed FY 2010 state budget](#)

[Read more about the House Finance and Tax Council's review of Florida's sales tax exemptions](#)

CENTRAL FLORIDA COMMUTER RAIL ON TRACK

Central Florida Commuter Rail, commonly known as "SunRail", pulled out of the station in the Senate with the approval of the Committee on Transportation by a 6 - 3 vote.

The plan, which faced heavy opposition last year, has been modified to remove sovereign immunity for CSX. Senate sponsor Lee Constantine (R - Orange County), has committed to work with communities that would be negatively impacted by commuter rail.

In addition, the new bill directs the Florida Department of Transportation to provide technical assistance to the counties of southwest Florida, including Hillsborough, for the purpose of developing a regional rail system plan for passenger and freight.