

CAPITOL UPDATE

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES 15% BUDGET HOLDBACK

On Thursday afternoon, Governor Charlie Crist announced that his office will hold back 15% of funds to state agencies for the upcoming 4th quarter of the fiscal year that runs from April 1 to June 30. This is in addition to the Governor's standing order to retain 4% of monies for the entire year.

The Governor's actions are in response to the current budget outlook projecting a \$1 billion deficit in the current budget.

This holdback might have a

significant impact on law enforcement, health care, courts, and education.

Additional funds could be released if the economy shows signs of improvement, or if federal economic stimulus dollars are received and properly allocated in a timely manner.

Next week the House and Senate appropriation committees may receive their funding allocations and begin the process of crafting their respective budget proposals. They will do

so with an approximately \$6 billion deficit looming.

The Senate is likely to offer a proposal that combines a mix of increased fees and gambling revenues, federal stimulus funds, and targeted expenditure cuts. The House may propose greater cuts to achieve a balanced budget. The House and Senate must negotiate and pass a single budget by the end of session on May 1 in order to avoid a future special session.

SEEKING FUTURE TRANSPORTATION REVENUE

The future of transportation in Florida is among the chief concerns of the public and private sectors. The ever growing need for faster and cleaner infrastructure to move people and goods is hindered by limited, and in today's economic climate, shrinking resources.

In an effort to seek a long-term, stable funding source, SB 582 creates the Florida Transporta-

tion Revenue Study Commission to examine state, regional, and local transportation needs and to develop recommendations for funding them. The committee is comprised of 12 members, one being a member of the Florida Association of Counties. The Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida will provide professional staff and support to the Commission. It

will make a final report to the Legislature by January 1, 2011.

The Commission will study a variety of issues affecting transportation, including: the effect of technology and alternative fuels, the ability to fund and address transportation needs at all levels of the state, and new and innovative options that can be developed to meet future needs.

DID YOU KNOW...

- **Until the mid-twentieth century, Florida was the least populous state. In 1900, its population was only 528,542. Today, Florida is the fourth largest state in the Union with over 18 million residents.**

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**ADVANCING
ALTERNATIVE
ENERGY**

Former Senate President Jim King has proposed legislation to promote the expansion and utilization of solar power in Florida to increase the state's energy diversity, and to stimulate job growth.

SB 1380 directs the Florida Solar Energy Center at the University of Central Florida to raise sufficient revenues to become self-sufficient. It also removes restrictions on state-specific standards that limit the amount and kinds of solar systems available for use while increasing costs.

Finally, the bill allows a manufacturer's representative to direct the installation of solar power equipment in order to ensure proper placement and assembly.

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

WEEKLY BILL TRACKER

Here is the latest activity on some of the significant bills and amendments being considered by the Legislature:

SB 360 - Relating to Growth Management: This bill has been fast-tracked in the Senate as an economic stimulus measure designed to spur growth by eliminating transportation concurrency requirements in dense urban areas. It also eliminates the developments of regional impact (DRI) process in designated counties, including Hillsborough County. It passed the Senate Policy and Steering Committee on Ways and Means on March 19, by a vote of 14 - 3. Next stop: Full Senate Consideration.

SB 1796 - Relating to Budget Transparency: A number of bills were filed this session seeking to open government budgets and shine a light on spending. This bill has emerged as the consensus package that creates a website where the public can view detailed revenue and expenditure data for all branches of state government. Local governments, and other government entities will be phased in in the future. The bill was scheduled for consideration on March 19, but was not taken up. It will be rescheduled for March 26.

SB 1906 - Relating to Revenue and Expenditure Limitations: Commonly referred to as "TABOR," this bill proposes a constitutional amendment limiting expenditures state and local governments, and requires voter approval via referendum for any new taxes or fees. The bill was debated at length on March 18 in the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee, and was temporarily postponed when the meeting ended before a vote was taken. The bill is to be placed on the committee agenda again on March 26.