

# CAPITOL UPDATE

WEEK 7 | APRIL 13 – 17, 2009

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## HOUSE AND SENATE PASS RESPECTIVE BUDGETS

The House and Senate spent Thursday and Friday in session preparing and debating their individual spending plans in preparation for budget conference.

The budgets are approximately \$500 million apart, with the Senate utilizing more revenues from federal stimulus funds, a \$1 per pack cigarette fee, and more gaming dollars. The House has expressed reservations about using the same amount of these resources for the budget, preferring greater cuts, along with other revenue sources such as a \$1.25 per ton fee on owners of solid waste disposal facilities

(including counties, who are required to provide this service by state law) “for the privilege of engaging in business” (HB 5121).

The leadership in both chambers will need to agree on just how much of these dollars will be acceptable in order to provide funding allocations to each budget area, including: civil and criminal justice, general government, education, and health care. Once these allocations are announced, conference committees in each respective area will begin negotiating spending plans. At a predetermined time, and unresolved differences between the budget

conference committees will be “bumped” to the full appropriations chairs of the House and Senate. From there, any final disagreements will then be sent to the Speaker and President for final disposition.

This has been and continues to be a contentious budget year, and negotiations will likely take extensive time and effort to reach consensus.

House Proposed Budget (5001)

House Proposed Budget (5101)

Senate Proposed Budget

House Conferees (Senate committee members are also conferees)

## NEW ELECTIONS BILL EMERGES

Early Friday morning, a proposed committee bill, now numbered as HB 7149, was filed and heard in the House Economic Development and Community Affairs Policy Council.

The measure is an 81 page omnibus elections bill that, among other things:

- Preempts any local or county elections provisions to the state in response to a court case currently before the Florida Supreme Court;

- Deletes the use of retirement center or neighborhood association identification as valid identification or voter registration;

- Requires third-party voter registration organizations and their paid employees register with the Florida Department of State, and imposes deadlines and fines for specified actions;

- Requires financial disclosure forms to be notarized;

- Reinstates the resign to run

provision for anyone who qualifies to run for federal office.

The bill passed its only committee of reference on a party-line vote, and is available for consideration by the full House.

Members and advocates expressed concerns that public testimony was limited in Council hearing, and that the bill was filed so late in session .

Governor Charlie Crist publically stated his misgivings about the bill and its intentions.

## DID YOU KNOW...

- **The first night flight took place at Tampa in 1911. The pilot, Lincoln Beachey, also set a world's altitude record over Tampa that same year.**

## RED LIGHT CAMERA BILLS GAIN TRACTION

After years of trying, this could be the year that the Legislature finally authorizes the use of red light traffic infraction cameras by local governments.

Recognizing a potential \$100 million revenue source, the state has fast-tracked SB 2004 by Senator Thad Altman (R—Brevard) by re-

moving two of its three remaining committee references in order to ready it for consideration by the full Senate.

Its companion measure, HB 439 by Rep. Ron Regan (R—Bradenton) passed the House Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council, and has one

remaining stop.

The bills preempt regulation of red light camera devices to the state, authorize a fine of \$150 per incident as a civil citation, grandfather existing systems until 2010, and allocate the fine revenues between local government, education, and trauma centers.

## HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

Legislation to provide assistance and a permanent path to ending homelessness is working its way through the committee system.

SB 1054 by Senator Victor Crist (R—Hillsborough County) and HB 597 by Representative Betty Reed (R—Tampa) redefines homelessness and creates the Housing First program. It emphasizes enhanced social services, and serves as a critical link between the emergency and transitional housing system and community-based social services, educational, and health care organizations.

SB 1054 cleared the third of its four committees of reference, while HB 597 is ready for action on the House floor.

The Hillsborough County Homeless Coalition, including County Health and Social Services Department staff, have worked diligently on this bill.

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT IDEAS HAVE MULTIPLE HOMES

Both sides of the Capitol are teeming with growth management provisions spread throughout multiple bills under the header “economic stimulus.”

SB 360 by Senator Mike Bennett (R—Manatee County), which has already passed the Florida Senate, and its companion, HB 7127, Representative Dorothy Hukill (R—Port Orange), creates transportation concurrency exemption areas in dense urban land areas. Hillsborough County is

one of the counties affected. It also eliminates proportionate fair share funding, and removes the Development of Regional Impact process. Its companion, HB 7127, was filed and automatically referred to the House calendar without a required hearing in the House.

SB 362, also by Senator Bennett, creates a special concurrency exception for agricultural enclaves in limited urban service areas, retroactively extends expired permits

by three years, and prohibits local governments from imposing security standards on businesses. The bill passed the Senate Transportation Committee on Thursday.

Other bills contain some of the aforementioned elements, including SB 1306 and SB 2148.

In the final two weeks of the Legislative Session, these and other similar bills may be amended with further challenges to home rule authority and local planning .

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

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**COMING ATTRACTIONS IN WEEK 8...**

House and Senate committees and councils will hold their final meetings, with the remaining days of the 2009 Legislative Session dedicated to debate and voting in chamber. Budget negotiations will be fast and furious, and must-pass legislation will be quickly shifted into the proper posture. Look for the following issues to be taken up:

**SunRail:** SB 1212 by Senator Lee Constantine (R—Orange County) was heard this week in Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations. However, time expired during the amendatory process, and the bill was temporarily postponed until next Monday. The issue was vigorously debated, with 73 members in the audience on hand to speak. The bill has faced significant opposition from the city of Lakeland, and others who claim that the deal is too expensive. It is supported by numerous local governments, transit advocates, and business interests in central Florida.

**Prescription Drug Monitoring:** HB 897 by Representative Marcelo Llorente (R—Miami-Dade) will likely be heard in the Full appropriations Council on General Government and Health Care. This is the bill's final stop in the House. Its Senate companion, SB 462 by Senator Mike Fasano (R—Pasco County) is available for the Special Order Calendar on the Senate floor

**Internet Safety Act:** SB 324 by Senator Victor Crist (R—Hillsborough County) should be considered in Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations, then be available for a hearing on the Senate floor.