



STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

Week 1: March 2 – 5

2010

Opening Day / Organization

The Senate convened at 9:00 a.m. and began by passing a road designation bill honoring former Senate President Jim King. His widow, Linda, was in attendance and received a sample road designation sign. The Senate then organized and called the 2010 State Legislative Session to order. Retiring Senators were individually recognized by Senate President Jeff Atwater for their years of service. He also touched on the need for greater fiscal responsibility and incentivizing economic development. [Click here to read the full text of President Atwater's remarks.](#)

The Florida House of Representatives convened at 10:00 a.m., with remarks by Speaker Larry Cretul, who stressed the need for implementing a high performance government that seeks efficiencies in operations. [Click here to view the full text of Speaker Cretul's remarks.](#)

Governor Crist delivered his final State of the State address to a joint session of the Florida Legislature, focusing on the need to stimulate the economy, grow jobs, and pass the Seminole Gaming Compact. [Click here to read the full text of Governor Crist's remarks.](#)

Affordable Housing

[HB 665](#) relating to affordable housing removes the statutory cap on the amount of documentary stamp revenue collected in the State Housing Trust Fund and the Local Government Trust Fund, providing more dollars for needed affordable housing projects. It also expands targeted affordable housing assistance for persons with special needs. It has an estimated negative fiscal impact to the state of \$21 million, making successful passage of the measure challenging. The bill passed its first of three committees of reference, the House Military and Local Affairs Committee, by a unanimous vote.

African-American and Women's Issues

The Florida Senate passed three resolutions honoring the contributions of African-Americans and women on Wednesday, March 3.



[SB 76](#) by Hillsborough County state Senator Arthenia Joyner, recognizes February 2010 as Black History Month in Florida.

[SB 1112](#) honors Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., for its service and work to improve the lives of African-Americans.

[SB 78](#), also by Senator Joyner, designates March 2010 as Women’s History Month in Florida.

Jobs for Florida

Diana Ferguson of FAC conducted a meeting on Tuesday, March 2, to discuss Section 24 of the draft “Jobs for Florida” Senate bill. Rick Tschantz of the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) was in attendance, along with participant in person and via conference call from Orange, Broward, and other Counties. The most relevant part of Section 24 affecting Hillsborough County reads as follows:

3143 | (3) A county having a population of more than 75,000 or
3144 | more or a municipality having or local pollution control
3145 | programs serving populations of more than 50,000 must apply for
3146 | delegation of authority on or before June 1, 2011. A county,
3147 | municipality, or local pollution control programs that fails to
3148 | apply for delegation of authority may not require permits that
3149 | in part or in full are substantially similar to the requirements
3150 | needed to obtain an environmental resource permit.

The term “substantially similar” is of particular concern, as it can be broadly interpreted to affect EPC and stormwater functions.

The draft bill is currently in the Senate Policy and Steering Committee on Ways and Means awaiting a budget impact analysis. County legislative staff will continue working with the EPC and other interested parties to resolve any negative impacts to the County.

Tampa – Hillsborough County Expressway Authority Appointment

The Senate Transportation Committee held confirmation hearings for executive appointments to various entities. One of these was the nomination of Donald E. Philips of Tampa for a term ending July 1, 2012. The committee confirmed Mr. Philips unanimously.



Tourist Development Taxes / Online Sellers of Travel

The House Finance & Tax Council conducted a workshop to gauge the members' interest in pursuing legislation to address the issue of how much tourist development tax dollars are collected when a hotel room is booked through an online intermediary, such as Expedia.com and Orbitz.com. Representatives from the Florida Department of Revenue, the Florida Association of Counties, and the online travel industry gave testimony and fielded questions from the council. The spoken opinion of most members was that collecting the tax from the online companies equated to a services tax. Chairman Bogdanoff announced that the Council would craft legislation for future consideration. It is anticipated that such a bill will support the online travel companies to the detriment of local governments and ongoing litigation by various interests. Hillsborough County's legislative staff will disseminate the legislation when it is made available and work with interested parties to promote the County's position.

Solid Waste / Landfills

The Legislature is again considering a statutory change to lift the ban on disposing yard waste in Class I landfills. Approximately 20 years ago yard waste was disallowed in an effort to save valuable landfill space. The current proposal, [HB 569](#) and [SB 1052](#), would allow Class I landfills with active gas collection systems, and provide for collection and beneficial utilization of the landfill gas, to accept yard waste. There are currently 12 such landfills that meet the bill's criteria, and is intended for a specific project in Brevard County. It does not have a direct impact on Hillsborough County. HB 569 passed its first committee of reference, the House Agricultural & Natural Resources Council, which is also chaired by the bill sponsor. County legislative staff will monitor the legislation to ensure it is not changed to negatively impact the County.

Presentation by the City of Plant City to Florida House Committees

Plant City Mayor Rick Lott and City Manager Greg Horwedel made presentations to the House Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council on March 3, and the House Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Committee on March 4, respectively. They discussed the city's successful implementation of a mobility fee as outlined in SB 360 last year, and its outcomes in terms of job growth and economic development. They also requested assistance in lifting drainage regulations in regards to a redevelopment project in Plant City. Podcasts of the meetings and presentations by Mayor Lott and Manager Horwedel can be accessed [here](#).



Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Appointment

The Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee held confirmation hearings for executive appointments to two water management districts. Jennifer E. Closshey of Plant City was unanimously confirmed for a term ending March 1, 2013.

Dangerous Dogs

[SB 1276](#) proposes to eliminate the prohibition on the regulation of specific dog breeds by local governments, but does not permit the banning of any breed. While the bill passed the first of its three committees of reference by a vote of 9-2, the bill met with significant resistance by numerous animal interests. The House companion measure, [HB 543](#), has yet to be heard in any committee. County legislative staff will continue monitoring this bill and report any further activity.

Children's Services

[SB 1216](#), considered by the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee, requires four major changes to the eleven Children's Services Councils in Florida - including the Hillsborough County Children's Board. It requires:

- a budget presentation to the Board of County Commissioners, along with an affirmative vote on the budget;
- BOCC approval to purchase or construct a building;
- the addition of one County Commissioner to the Council; and
- a periodic voter referendum to reapprove the Children's Services Council.

The bill was temporarily postponed following testimony by numerous interested parties. County staff will continue to monitor this legislation.