

Emergent Design and Development, Inc.
Legislative Update
NOVEMBER 27, 2006

Elections

Everyone in Tallahassee is relieved that the elections are over and we can begin organizing for the 2006-07 Legislative Session. There are still many unanswered questions about which individual legislators will be assuming leadership positions, but these positions will be confirmed by December 4.

- Governor Crist is expected to continue the Bush program, however, he has called for resignations from all SES employees. We expect many of these SES employees will be reappointed. He has named George LeMieux as his chief of staff, Paul Huck as general council, and Jerry McDaniel as Office of Policy and Budget director.
- House of Representatives (79 Republicans,41 Democrats)
- Senate (some hurt feelings remain, caused by one Miami Dade election) (26 Republicans,14 Democrats)
- Federal changes have swung toward Democrats in Washington, as they are the majority in both houses, we will have to wait to see if this impacts education, especially programs such as NCLB.
- Amendments to the Florida Constitution, especially No.3 were very important election issues. The passage of amendment No.3 makes it very hard to revisit the class-size issue.

Committees

- Committee structure announcements were made on Nov.21.
- New committee structures were instituted in both houses, which will effect education.
- K-12 is separate from higher education in both houses of the legislature.
- South Florida influence evident in power positions. (House Speaker is Marco Rubio of Miami and Senate President is Ken Pruitt of Port St. Lucie).
- Other House leadership appointees are: Speaker pro tempore will be Rep. Dennis Baxley (Ocala), Majority leader will be Rep. Marty Bowen (Winter Haven), Majority whip will be Rep. Ellyn Bogdanoff (Ft. Lauderdale). Rep. Joe Pickens has been chosen to chair the Schools and Learning Council which means all of education is under his leadership. Including appropriations.
- Other Senate Leadership appointees are: Pres. Pro tempore will be Senator Lisa Carlton (Sarasota), Senator Dan Webster (Orlando) will be senate majority leader.
- House Education Committees Committee are under the schools and Learning council, are Educational Innovation and Career Preparation,

Committee on K-12, Committee on Postsecondary Education, and Committee on 21st Century Competitiveness.

- Senate Education Committees under the Fiscal Policy Grouping Council are: Committee on K-12, Education Facilities, and Higher Education. Under the Social Responsibility Policy Grouping are: Committee on Pre-K thru 12 and Committee on Higher Education.

3. **Calendar:** Due to November elections there is a late start with six weeks of committee meetings.

Nov. 28-29	Member Training for all members
Dec. 4-8	Interim Committee Meetings
Dec. 11-13	District Staff Training of new hires only
Jan. 8-12	Interim Committee Meetings
Jan. 22-26	Interim Committee Meetings
Feb. 5-9	Interim Committee Meetings
Feb. 12-16	Interim Committee Meetings
Feb. 19-23	Interim Committee Meetings
Mar. 1-2	Pre-Session training for District Staff
Mar. 6	Opening Day of the 2007 Regular Session

4. **Reorganization**

The reorganization of many agencies is expected. However, The Commissioner of Education is, by law, appointed by the State Board of Education and may not be effected. State Board of Education Members, have overlapping terms, and will not be appointed by Governor Crist until terms expire.

5. **Legislative Issues**

- Rising Insurance Costs and Coverage. This may be the number one issue.
- Health Insurance. Is there assistance for the uninsured?
- Workforce Education is becoming very important, expect to see major dollars appropriated to this area.
- STAR program (increased pay based upon student results) pending lawsuit by Unions
- Schools of Excellence Program (charter school approval by this newly appointed commission) expect challenges by local School Boards.

6. **Education Issues**

- Science FCAT has generated district concerns over low scores.
- The need to increase FCAT performance in Mathematics continues to be a major concern. This is especially true with specific sub-groups. There is currently an RFP from the DOE to develop a Mathematics and Science

Research Center, similar to the FCRR. No decision has been reached about its location, as yet.

- Class size and Construction costs are escalating and take more and more of the education budget. The DOE has asked the legislature for a 25% budget increase in this area.
- The DOE is requesting increased dollars for the STARS program. The DOE request would double this allocation, as well as double the number of teachers receiving it.
- The legislatively mandated school calendar continues as a discussion item. Will it be revisited?
- Workforce Education will center on preparing students to enter the workforce with improved skills.
- Rigor and Relevance will be an issue. (fewer standards--more in depth) This is an issue associated with Willard Daggett.
- Should Mathematics and Science work closer together? Could they become a greater budget issue, if they did?
- Teacher Recruitment and Retention will remain an issue with the estimated need for as many as 30,000 new teachers next year.

7. **Budget**

- Last year was the largest Education budget ever at approximately \$18 billion dollars. The DOE request for this year is \$20 billion.
- There is a large surplus of money which has been accumulated by the Bush administration, upwards of \$6 billion dollars has been added to the state's "rainy day" fund.
- Will the next Governor spend the reserves? (Possibly to help solve the insurance issue.)
- The Class Size issue continues to require a major portion of the budget. This is a problem both in salaries and additional need for classroom space.

8. **Miscellaneous**

- FETC is Jan. 24-26
 - Will feature Science-2007 (Bill Nye The Science Guy)
 - Will feature Mathematics-2008 (any ideas for keynote?)
- Did you know that nationally Education K-20 is an \$800 billion dollar business?