

EMERGENT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT LEGISLATIVE UPDATE September 2007

There are many interesting issues to talk about in the world of Tallahassee politics and Florida education. A special session, the regular session, tax cuts and their effects, PIP insurance, a major budget shortfall, and a search for a new Florida Commissioner of Education are a few of the topics that you have read about. I will try to share a few ideas regarding some of these issues.

1. **Calendar dates for upcoming sessions**

- a. A Special Session for budget is scheduled for October 3 thru 12.
- b. The Revenue Estimating Conference is scheduled for Sept. 27th.
- c. Interim Committee Meetings. (There is a one day meeting Sept. 27)
October 1-5
November 5-9
December 10-14
January 7-11
January 22-25
February 4-8
February 18-22
- d. Regular Session 2008-2009.
March 4, 2008 Regular Session convenes.
April 22, 2008 Last day for regularly scheduled committees.
May 2, 2008 60th day, end of regular session.

2. **Legislative Hot Topics (Interim study items)**

Each year, in preparation for the next year's session, the Legislature requests studies of upcoming issues. These studies are typically completed by the staff.

- a. Dropout rates and efforts to reduce dropouts. (House)
- b. Charter School Accountability. (House) (Senate)
- c. Career Centers to Career Colleges. (House)
- d. Student participation in visual and performing arts. (Senate)
- e. Allegations of child abuse by school district employees. (Senate)
- f. Leadership for effective Career Education. (Senate)
- g. Monitoring high performing school districts. (Senate)
- h. Monitoring implementation of career academies. (Senate)
- i. Oversight of FCAT. (Senate)
- j. Review of k-12 virtual education. (Senate)
- k. Impact of general appropriations act on Pre-K-12. (Senate)
- l. Class size reduction compliance. (Senate)
- m. Pre-K participation and readiness. (Senate)

3. **Budget Shortfall**

These are the current estimated budget shortfalls to the state budget caused by housing slowdown, tax collections, etc. provided by the most recent Revenue Estimating Conference. These numbers may change during the next Revenue Estimating Conference to be held on September 27.

a. General Revenue.

2007-2008 (\$1,115,300,000)

2008-2009 (\$1,403,800,000)

2009-2010 (\$1,411,700,000)

b. Educational Enhancement Trust Fund.

2007-2008 (\$45,200,000)

2008-2009 (\$92,800,000)

2009-2010 (\$41,000,000)

c. Principal State School Trust Fund.

2007-2008 (\$6,600,000)

2008-2009 (\$16,300,000)

2009-2010 (\$4,600,000)

5. **Educational Budget Cuts.** (Ideas and Proposals being discussed, Final decisions will be made during the Special Session Oct 3-12)

a. Legislators are considering a 4% cut of general revenue across the board.

b. The cut will be less than the 10% discussion (Governor's exercise).

c. The Governor has proposed no cuts in education.

d. The Legislature has said that education must be cut. (Joe Pickens)

e. Delay the \$147.5 Million Teacher Merit Pay Program. (Steve Wise)

f. Cut Instructional Materials \$27 Million.

g. Cut school transportation \$49 Million.

h. Cut school recognition \$27 Million.

i. Class size and Teacher Lead are not to be touched.

j. The FEFP must be reduced in any plan, How much is the question.

6. **Hot Topics for School Districts**

As a result of predicted legislative interest, school districts throughout Florida are going to be paying particular attention to the following issues.

a. Virtual Education

b. Dropout prevention and Dropout Recovery

c. Credit Recovery Programs

d. "C" grade make-up from middle school, does this add another course?

e. New Math Standards, Are the old ones still being tested?

f. Supreme Court decision requiring voter approval of major capital projects. Does this apply to school construction that use bonds?

7. **Florida Commissioner of Education Search**

The State Board of Education narrowed the list of applicants for Commissioner of Education to 7 candidates. On Sept. 17, the Board narrowed the field to 3. (Eric Smith, Joe Marinelli, and Cheri Yecke) Their vitas are available on the PROACT Search, Inc. web site. The State Board will interview this month and a final decision is expected next month. The 7 candidates were:

Dr. William Harner
Dr. Earl Lennard
Dr. Joseph Marinelli
Dr. William Moloney
Dr. Eric Smith
Mr. James Warford
Dr. Cheri Pierson Yecke

8. **Florida Tax Reform.**

The Tax reform that was implemented as a result of the Special Session will have serious impact on Florida School Districts. The reform has 2 parts. The first was what amounted to a freeze of current local property tax rates and the second is dependent on passage of a statewide referendum in January that would significantly increase the State's homestead exemption through a Constitutional Amendment. Already many counties and cities are passing costs of services such as school resource officers, crossing guards, and emergency services on to School Districts. Local governments are considering increasing various fees to replace lost revenue. Some suggest that local bond ratings may be lowered, making borrowing more costly.

9. Education Web Sites you may find interesting.

www.edutopia.org	George Lucas Education Foundation
www.eschoolnews.com/resources	Education Resource Center
www.ascd.org/portal/site	ASCD Smart Brief
www.teachersdomain.org	Teachers Domain
www.thefutureschannel.com/index.php	Free video
http://educationti.com/educationportal	Texas Instrument Education
www.discoveryeducatornetwork.com	Free staff development

10. Education Bills of Interest Filed Prior to September 6.

- HB 0003 Relating to Children's Zones** Bendross-Mindingall
Children's Zones: Provides for counties & municipalities to designate certain areas as children's zones; provides process for nominating children's zones; provides for children's zone planning teams & corporations & strategic community plans; establishes Magic City Children's Zone pilot project & creates Magic City Children's Zone, Inc.; provides appropriations. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0013 Relating to Telephone Solicitation** Jordan
Telephone Solicitation: Revises disclosure statement requirements for certain telephone solicitations; prohibits certain telephone solicitation by any person on behalf of candidate for federal, state, or local political office, committee of continuous existence, or other political entity. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0019 Relating to Coverage for Mental, Nervous, and Substance-related Disorders** Homan
Coverage for Mental, Nervous, and Substance-related Disorders: Revises requirements for optional coverage for mental, nervous, & substance-related disorders; revises benefits limitations; provides options application requirement; revises benefits offered by group plans. Effective Date: January 1, 2009.
- HB 0021 Relating to State Aid to Public Libraries** Davis (D)
State Aid to Public Libraries: Changes state grant eligibility criteria for multicounty library grants; revises determination for & amount of base grants; revises eligibility criteria, calculation, & grant determination for equalization grants; limits equalization grants & grant amounts under specified conditions. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0023 Relating to Education Facilities** Richardson
Education Facilities: Establishes Green Schools Pilot Project to enable selected school districts to comply with certain building-certification standards; provides for selection of school districts, evaluation, & funding; provides appropriation. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0033 Relating to Presumption of Correctness for Ad Valorem Tax Assessment** Frishe
Presumption of Correctness for Ad Valorem Tax Assessment: Provides that presumption of correctness of property appraiser's ad valorem tax assessment for income-producing property is lost if assessment is not based on income approach to value. Effective Date: January 1, 2009.
- SB 0044 Relating to Relief/Karen W. Stripling/DOE** Posey
Relief/Karen W. Stripling/DOE; Provides relief for Karen Stripling for damages she sustained as a result of a breach of contract by the Department of Education, etc. CLAIM WITH APPROPRIATION: \$2,720,000. EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon becoming law.
- HB 0053 Relating to Health Insurance** Peterman
Health Insurance: Designates act "Senator Les Miller Act"; requires health insurance policies, group health insurance policies, & health maintenance contracts to provide coverage for annual screening for prostate cancer for men of age 40 or older; provides that coverage for prostate cancer screening does not limit diagnostic benefits otherwise allowed under policy or contract. Effective Date: January 1, 2009, and shall apply to policies or contracts issued or renewed on or after that date.
- HB 0055 Relating to Composition of Cabinet; Office of Commissioner of Education** Brisé
Composition of Cabinet; Office of Commissioner of Education: Proposes amendment of s. 4, Art. IV & s. 2, Art. IX & creation of s. 27, Art. XII of State Constitution to create office of Commissioner of Education, who will be elected member of Cabinet & responsible for supervision of public education system in manner prescribed by law, & to provide effective date of January 4, 2011, for such change & for office of Commissioner of Education to be filled initially at 2010 general election. Effective Date: Not Specified

- HB 0059 Relating to Tuition Waivers** Scionti
Tuition Waivers: Designates act as "Veterans' Tuition Assistance Act"; requires state universities & community colleges to waive percentage of in-state tuition rate for veterans who meet specified criteria; provides percentage cap on number of required credit hours for which tuition waiver may be received. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0065 Relating to Supplemental Educational Services** Gonzalez
Supplemental Educational Services: Requires DOE to annually evaluate & grade supplemental educational services providers; specifies evaluation criteria; requires publication of grades. Effective Date: July 1, 2008.
- HB 0067 Relating to Florida Retirement System** Culp
Florida Retirement System: Increases period of time in which members of FRS who are employed as certain administrative personnel in grades K-12 may participate in DROP; provides declaration of important state interest. Effective Date: upon becoming a law.
- HB 0073 Relating to Illegal Immigration** Brown
Illegal Immigration: Prohibits restrictions on reporting of immigration status information by public employees; prohibits local government restrictions concerning immigration law enforcement; requires verification of immigration status of persons confined for DUI or BUI; limits issuance of driver's licenses to US citizens or persons with specified legal immigration status; limits duration of specified licenses or identification cards; requires public employer participation in specified federal program to verify work authorization status of newly hired employees; requires participation in program by contractors & subcontractors; provides that discharge of US citizen or permanent resident alien employee by employer who on date of discharge employed unauthorized alien is unfair trade practice; provides civil remedy; requires verification of lawful presence of persons over specified age applying for ... Effective Date: October 1, 2008.
- HB 0077 Relating to Driver License Restrictions** Skidmore
Driver License Restrictions: Restricts number of certain passengers permitted in vehicle operated by person under certain age; provides for secondary enforcement & citation procedures for violations. Effective Date: October 1, 2008.