

Emergent Design & Development Inc.
Legislative Update
APRIL 21, 2008

We are rapidly approaching the end of the 2008 Legislative Session. The end of the scheduled 60 day session is May 2nd. The Session is heating up as the legislative positions of Democrats and Republican appear to be very different, especially in the House.

With only nine days remaining, it is still very difficult to predict which bills will pass and which will die a natural death from not being heard on the House and Senate floor.

When the Session began, we were tracking over 300 bills relating to education. To date, only one of these bills have passed both houses and been sent to the Governor. (SB 242, Single gender classes) Thirteen bills have passed one chamber and are scheduled to be heard in the other chamber and eighteen bills are available to be heard on the floor for the first time.

When the session ends, we will send you the final summary of bills that passed the Legislature and await the action of the Governor.

BUDGET

The budget is the single most important issue facing the Legislature this year. There are reported shortfalls in revenue collection in all areas of the budget. This will translate into drastic reductions in all areas of the budget including education. There will not be a “hold harmless” provision which will save education from a budget cut. However, the severity of the education cuts appear to be less than other areas of the budget.

Previously, we predicted that the reductions which were proposed by the Senate would be closer to the final budget that those proposed by the House. (The House proposed a smaller reduction.) It now appears the final position will be more of a cut than the Senate proposal. This final budget will mean fewer dollars per student than districts received in 2007-08 and could be less than they received in 2006-07. This comes at a time when districts face increased costs of gasoline, electricity, insurance, supplies, and employee costs.

In their effort to show the severity of the revenue shortfall, Legislators are considering cutting their own salaries and eliminating all member projects. Some of these member projects have been budgeted each of the last 10 years.

The total Senate budget proposal was \$65.9 billion and the House proposed \$65.1 billion. (These are total numbers, not just education.) Last year’s state budget was over \$72 billion dollars. Either way, the budget appears to be facing a cut of about \$6 billion.

Both Houses have named conference committee members who will negotiate the differences in their respective budgets. There are many items that are significantly different between the two budgets. Conference is scheduled to begin today. Once agreement is reached on the total education budget, the real bargaining will begin. We expect that the budget will be final by Monday April, 28. By Florida law, the budget must be published 72 hours before the Legislature can vote on it and legally adjourn.

Many Legislators hope to have adjournment as quickly as possible in order to allow them to begin raising money, get on the campaign trail, and preparing for upcoming elections.

We believe that after elections are over, we can expect to see Legislators back in Tallahassee to once again reduce the budget.

BILLS OF INTEREST

There have been no new bills filed since our last update. However, many bills have not been heard or have died in committees. We believe that the following bills will continue to work their way thru the legislative process.

BILLS WITH A GOOD CHANCE OF PASSAGE

[HB 7043 – Maximum Class Size by Schools & Learning](#)
[SB 1712 – Ethics in Education Act by Education Pre-K - 12](#)
[SB 2308 – Commissioner of Education](#)
[SB 1908 – Designation of High School Grades by Gaetz](#)
[HB 7045 – Public School Curricular Standards by Schools & Learning Council](#)
[SB 610 -- Physical Education by Constantine](#)
[HB 669 – School Safety / Bullying by Thompson](#)
[HB 65 – Supplemental Educational Services by Gonzalez](#)

BILLS WITH A CHANCE OF PASSAGE

[SB 1906 – Alternative Credit High School Courses by Gaetz](#)
[HB 871 – Educational Facilities Contracting by Kreegel](#)
[HB 251 – Reserve Officers' Training Corps Program by Jordan](#)
[HB 7039 – Florida Teachers Lead Program by Schools & Learning Council](#)
[SB 642 – School / Multiple Birth Siblings by Siplin](#)
[HB 7067 – Virtual Education by Schools & Learning Council](#)
[SB 1070 – Intergovernmental Cooperation by King](#)
[HB 653 – Corporate Income Tax Credit Scholarship Program by Traviesa](#)
[SB 2692 – Teaching of Chemical and Biological Evolution by Storms](#)

BILLS THAT MAY BE HEARD

School Advisory Councils (SB1914)
Interscholastic Extracurricular Activities (SB 0526)
Charter Technical Career Centers (SB 1652)

Florida Retirement System (HB 1049) (SB 2848) (HB 7079)

BILLS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

CLASS SIZE (HB 7043)

The class size relief bill will allow school districts to report averages at the school level (not actual class size) for both the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years.

Districts cannot exceed the constitutionally required class size in a class by more than 4 in the 2008-09 school year and may not exceed the constitutionally required class size by more than 2 in the 2009-10 school year.

All schools must meet the constitutionally mandated size requirements by 2010—11.

ELECTED COMMISSIONER (SB 2308)

This bill changes several aspects of education in Florida. It changes the State Board of Education back to the Governor and Cabinet.

The Commissioner of Education becomes a statewide elected official and a member of the State Board of Education.

The Board of Trustees at each University will consist of 11 members appointed by the Governor for 5 year terms. (The President of the Faculty Senate and the Student Body President will remain as members.)

The Board of Governors will consist of 6 members appointed by the Governor for 4 year terms. (The Chairman of the Council of Faculty Senates and the President of the Florida Student Association will remain as members.)

On the effective date of this bill, all current terms expire.