

Emergent Design and Development

Legislative Update

March 25, 2011

Here is a quick overview of the happenings in the Legislature this week.

BUDGET The House and Senate budget proposals are getting closer together. The Base Student Allocation in the Senate is \$3,571.96 and in the House it is \$3,564.46. Both of these allocations are over \$50 per student less than last year. Overall, the Senate budget reduces total funds per unweighted FTE by \$423.27 (reduction of 6.21%). The House budget reduces total funds per unweighted FTE by \$473.41 (reduction of 6.96%). On Thursday the House agreed to add \$54 Million into their education budget. They have not revealed where this allocation will appear. These differences will probably be worked out in Conference Committee in the last week of the Session. Districts can expect to receive a decrease in funds of over 6% for next year's budget.

RETIREMENT The House Committee on State Affairs voted out a committee bill on retirement (HB 1405). It differs from the Senate bill which we reported last week. Both bills would require employee contribution to the retirement system. The House chose to make the level of contribution 3% for all members. The House did not change the accrual rate, now in law. The retirement age for employees hired after July 1, will increase to 65, or 33 years of service. DROP would close to anyone not in the program prior to July 1, 2011. The retiree health insurance subsidy would remain the same. It is doubtful that the differences between the House and Senate bills will be settled soon. However, it is a fact that there will be changes in retirement programs for next year.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/1405/BillText/c2/PDF>

STUDENT SUCCESS ACT The Governor has signed CS/CS/SB 736 into law. He signed the bill on Thursday at a KIPP charter school in Jacksonville. The law will go into effect on July 1, however several parts of the bill are implemented at later dates.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/0736/BillText/er/PDF>

UNION DUES The House of Representatives will debate HB 1021 which would end automatic union dues deduction by public employers. A similar bill SB 830 is proceeding in the Senate. Both bills are expected to pass during this Legislative Session.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/1021/BillText/c1/PDF>

VIRTUAL LEARNING There are several bills filed that would impact virtual education in Florida. Included in these bills would be changes in the materials selection process, a requirement that 50% of the instructional materials budget be spent on digital materials, that by 2014 all required end of course assessments be administered on line, a required course in on-line learning for all students, district approved digital pilot schools, and a 5 year cycle for instructional materials instead of the current 6 year cycle. As these bills are refined, a consolidated bill will emerge and we will be able to reference a bill for your reaction.

COMMISSIONER ERIC SMITH This week Commissioner of Education Smith announced his resignation. This announcement was met with surprise by several of the members of the State Board of Education. It appears that the State Board will expedite a search for a successor, to be in place by the opening of school for the 2011-12 school year. Commissioner Smith has not publicly announced his future plans.