

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2022 Legislative Session

Week 6

February 18, 2022

We have officially moved into the second half of the legislative session, and this week was a LONG one. The full House met for two marathon discussions of their preliminary budget, and the Senate followed suit. As we near the end of the legislative session, committees will stop meeting, and the House and Senate will meet as chambers more and more. We will make sure to keep you posted on all the goings-on during these fast-paced times.

House Moves Testing Bill

The testing bill, **HB 1193**, K-12 Assessments and Accountability by Rep. Rene Plasencia (R-Titusville), was heard in the PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee on Wednesday, where **it passed unanimously**. The bill sets the framework for converting from the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) to the new state standards and instituting a statewide progress monitoring assessment.

As this bill moves through the final stages, we will continue to advocate for:

- Limiting the amount of time students spend testing.
- Increasing and securing appropriate planning time for teachers.
- Ensuring that appropriate baselines are set for school grades moving forward.

We greatly appreciate **the testimony of Ashley Modesto**, a math teacher and member of the Orange County Classroom Teachers Association, who discussed her concerns for her students. Ms. Modesto's students are currently scheduled for district-mandated progress

monitoring at the end of every quarter. She is concerned that if state progress monitoring is added to the current schedule, her students will spend even more time testing and less time on instruction and practice.

The bill will now head to its final committee stop, the Education and Employment Committee. We hope you will continue to provide your legislators with your perspective and information about your needs through our [action alerts](#) and [Power Hours](#).

The Senate version of the bill, SB 1048 by Sen. Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah), has passed all its assigned committees and is ready to be heard by the full Senate.

Budget, Budget, Budget

This week the House and Senate each passed their chamber's respective budgets. Now comes the hard part: Lawmakers will begin to hash out their spending differences, including over \$3 billion in total allocation.

The Senate budget sits at \$108.6 billion, while the House has a tighter budget at \$105.3 billion. Budget conferees should be announced soon, and the budget conference – where lawmakers are assigned to negotiate spending and budget policy differences between the two chamber's budgets – will begin shortly thereafter.

We will be watching carefully as the House has \$200 million more in the categorical to fund instructional personnel salaries while also offering more flexibility in how districts can allocate those funds. The House also punishes the twelve districts that chose to defy the governor's student masking policies by withholding funding totaling \$200 million.

On the other hand, the Senate includes enough funding in the base student allocation to ensure every support personnel is provided a minimum wage of \$15 an hour beginning Oct. 1. We will be advocating for the best of both of the chambers' budgets to be the final education budget adopted by both.

Don't Say Gay Bill

HB 1557, by Rep. Joe Harding (R-Ocala), has earned the nickname of the Don't Say Gay bill.

This proposed legislation says that only parents should discuss and decide what their children are exposed to in the classroom and school. If the bill became law, it would allow parents to sue school districts that violate these provisions. The bill passed on a vote of **13-7** and is now ready for the House floor.

Meanwhile, the Senate has been slow to push their version of the bill, **SB 1834**, by Sen. Dennis Baxley (R-Lady Lake). **SB 1834** has only been considered in one of its three committees of reference; with the 50th day of the session looming, the bill only has so much time to pass and be ready for the floor.

Presidential Searches

This week, HB 703, Postsecondary Education Executive Search by Rep. Sam Garrison (R-Orange Park), passed its final committee stop. The bill would eliminate the current requirement that searches for college and university presidents be conducted in public. The House amended the bill to match the Senate bill. With the amendments in place, the final list of applicants is to be released 21 days before the final decision is made. It would also require that all applicants' age, race and gender be released when the final group of applicants is released. The bill passed by a vote of **18-1**, with Rep. Susan Valdes (D-Tampa) as the sole no vote, and heads to the House floor, where a two-thirds majority is needed for the bill to pass.

Virtual School Changes

HB 5101, Education, was considered on the House floor this week. The bill is a part of the House's budget position and makes changes to franchises of the Florida Virtual School. There are currently 34 Florida Virtual School franchises operating throughout the state, an additional 15 districts operate their own full time virtual schools, and a consortium of districts provides virtual instruction to 15 districts.

There was lots of debate and discussion surrounding this bill. Rep. Robin Bartleman (D-Weston) discussed how several of the FLVS franchises out-perform FLVS and the importance of keeping these franchises going, as students can still access the amenities and programs offered by the district.

The bill passed by a vote of **97-20**. The Senate does not have a position on this issue. However, because it is a budget conforming bill, it will be a subject of budget negotiations.

Tax Package Released

The House Ways and Means Committee released its annual tax package. The yearly tax package includes several sales tax exemptions, including the annual Back to School Sales Tax Holiday. The proposed holiday would be the week of July 25-Aug. 7 and would include clothing, school supplies, learning aids and personal computers. Taxes will be exempt on clothing and footwear items with a sale price of \$100 or less, school supply items with a sale price of \$50 or less, learning aids with a sale price of \$30 or less, and personal computers or personal computer accessories with a sale price of \$1,500 or less.

House Moves to Finalize Congressional Maps

Something happened Monday that has not ever happened before: The Legislature's proposed state House and Senate redistricting maps were sent to the Florida Supreme Court for their automatic review, and *no one challenged* them.

Both the House and Senate maps give Democrats the opportunity to pick up seats in the Republican-controlled chambers. The Senate map gives Republicans a potential 23-17 advantage over Democrats in the 40-member chamber. The House map gives Republicans a 71-49 edge in the 120-member House.

Up until today, the congressional maps remained up in the air. The biggest hold-up were the governor's unsolicited maps, which effectively removed multiple constitutionally protected seats. However, the House Congressional Redistricting subcommittee met today and **passed their maps** out of committee by a vote of **14-7**. The House and Senate maps are relatively similar, with some differences in Central Florida. The two chambers will now settle their differences and agree on a final map.

Joining us for lobby visits?

- Register with the **Florida AFL-CIO Working Family Lobby Corps** prior to your trip.
(Please note you will need to be vaccinated to join the Working Family Lobby Corps.)
- Register and **join FEA for a Lobby Visit Briefing**. Lobby Visit Briefings are held Monday at 6:00 pm.

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