

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2022 Legislative Session

Week 8

March 4, 2022

This week the House and Senate started their budget conference process, which quickly came to a close. The budgets have now been bumped up to the Appropriations chairs, Sen. Kelli Stargel (R-Lakeland), and Rep. Jay Trumbull (R-Panama City). For the session to end on time, the final budget must be delivered to legislators on Tuesday, which means there will be lots of closed-door conversations this weekend about the budget.

Last Day of Committees

On Monday and Tuesday, we likely saw the last committee meetings of the 2022 legislative session. It was a doozy of a day with several bad bills working through the legislative process.

CS/HB 7051, Postsecondary Education, was considered in the House Education and Employment Committee. As a reminder, this bill would require all of Florida's public colleges and universities to change their accrediting agencies after each accreditation cycle. The bill poses a considerable risk to federal financial aid and the rankings of our higher education institutions, while also adding bureaucratic burdens to the schools' faculty, staff and administration. A big thank you to our members Matthew Lata and Nicole Morse for coming out and testifying about what this bill means to our higher education institutions. Matthew and Nicole did a fantastic job answering questions from legislators and addressing our concerns. Unfortunately, the bill passed on an almost party-line vote of **15 yeas and 6 nays**, with Rep. James Bush (D-Miami) joining the Republicans in supporting the bill.

The Senate was busy hearing some controversial bills from the House. **HB 1557, Parental Rights in Education or “Don’t Say Gay,”** by Rep. Joe Harding (R-Ocala) was considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee. While **HB 1467, K-12 Education,** by Rep. Sam Garrison (R-Orange Park), and **HB 7, Individual Freedoms or “Erase History,”** by Rep. Bryan Avila (R-Miami), were considered in the Senate Rules Committee. All three bills passed on a party-line vote and now head to the Senate floor for consideration.

A Quick Turnaround

Over the weekend, the House Judiciary Committee amended **HB 1203, Education,** by Rep. Elizabeth Fetterhoff (R-DeLand). What started as a simple one-page bill has now expanded to a 48-page education train. On Monday, the House Judiciary Committee considered the bill, which now includes provisions that would limit longevity raises for teachers and keep the provision that would bar unions from collectively bargaining the evaluation process. The Judiciary Committee passed the bill by a vote of **12-7.**

The bill was then placed on the session calendar. During today's second reading, members of the House asked questions and offered amendments to the bill. We want to thank Rep. Michael Grieco (D-Miami) for offering two amendments to the bill, which would strip the bill's longevity pay and evaluation provisions. At the time that this report was written, these amendments had not yet been voted on. The bill will be voted on by the full House on Monday.

Another bill moving quickly this week was **HB 1197, Employee Organizations Representing Public Employees,** by Reps. Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) and Cord Byrd (R-Jacksonville Beach). The bill was heard in State Affairs, its final committee of reference. After lengthy questions of the sponsors and debate by committee members, the bill passed **14-10,** with Reps. Toby Overdorf (R-Stuart) and Anthony Rodriguez (R-Miami) joining the Democrats in voting no. We thank the 38 people who traveled to Tallahassee to testify or waive their time in opposition.

The House wasted little time on moving this bill to the floor. **HB 1197** was on the Special Order calendar for questions on Thursday and was debated and passed today. The final vote was **60-47.** We thank the following Republicans who voted with the Democrats in opposition: Reps. Aloupis, Busatta-Cabrera, Duggan, Mooney, Overdorf, Rodriguez and Salzman.

The promising news is that the Senate has still not heard **SB 1458** by Sen. Baxley (R-Lady Lake), companion legislation to HB 1197, in a single committee of reference. For our longtime readers, you know nothing is final until the final gavel down on the last day of session, so we

will be watching for any component of this bill to be filed as an amendment onto another bill moving this session.

Session, Session, Session

The House and Senate have been hard at work in their respective chambers. Here are some bills that are working their way through the final stages of the legislative process:

- **SB 236, Children with Developmental Delays**, passed the full Senate unanimously. The bill would extend the upper age limit for students with developmental delays from age 5 to 9, the maximum age authorized by the federal government. **HB 15** by Rep. Allison Tant (D-Tallahassee) is ready for a vote on the House floor.
 - **HB 235, Restraint of Students with Disabilities in Public Schools**, by Rep. Rene Plasencia (R-Titusville), passed unanimously. If signed into law, this bill would prohibit schools from using mechanical restraints on students with disabilities. **SB 390** by Sen. Lauren Book (D-Plantation) is ready for a vote on the Senate floor.
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Bouncing Back and Forth

This week the House worked on **SB 102, Establishing the Congressional Districts of the State**, by Sen. Ray Rodrigues (R-Fort Myers). The House made the unusual choice to add a backup plan to the congressional maps approved by the Senate, just in case something goes wrong. The bill passed the House **67-47**. The bill will be sent back to the Senate to consider and approve or deny the House's changes.

The governor has indicated that he will veto the current congressional maps being considered in the House and Senate.

Headed to the Governor

- **HB 777, Local Tax Referenda**, by Rep. Will Robinson (R-Bradenton), requires that referenda authorizing certain optional local taxes, including school district milage

referenda, be held during a general election. The bill passed out of the **Senate unanimously**. The bill had been considered in the House on Feb. 24 and passed by a vote of **111-2**.

- **HB 395, Victims of Communism Day**, by Reps. David Borrero (R-Miami) and Anthony Rizo (R-Hialeah), requires the governor to recognize Nov. 7 as "Victims of Communism Day." Additionally, the bill states that starting in the 2023-2024 school year, students enrolled in U.S. Government must receive 45 minutes of instruction on "Victims of Communism Day" topics. The bill passed out of the **Senate unanimously** this week. The bill had been considered in the House on Feb. 24 and passed by a vote of **115-0**.
- **HB 173, Care of Students with Epilepsy**, by Reps. Nicholas Duran (D-Miami) and Mike Gottlieb (D-Sunrise), creates an individualized seizure plan (ISAP). An ISAP informs school personnel of the healthcare services required by a student with epilepsy and provides training and information on responding to emergencies. The bill passed out of the **Senate unanimously** this week. The bill had been considered in the House on Feb. 25 and passed by a vote of **106-0**.
- **SB 520, Public Records and Meetings Postsecondary Education Executive Search**, by Rep. Sam Garrison (R-Orange Park), eliminates the current requirement that searches for college and university presidents be conducted in public. The bill passed out of the House by a vote of **86-26** today. The bill had been considered in the Senate on Feb. 10 and passed by **28-11**.

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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