

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2024 Legislative Session

March 1, 2024

A Brief Recap of the Week

The roller coaster ride that is Florida's legislative session is almost over. With quite a bit of legislation that still hasn't passed both chambers, we might be in for a bumpy ride on the ninth and final week of session next week.

Read on to learn more about

- Budget update,
- Missed opportunities for deregulation,
- Continued attacks on teaching honest history,
- The Commissioner of Education's African American History Task Force, and
- Attacks on workers and their unions.

Budget update

While the budget likely won't be finalized until Tuesday, March 5, the House and Senate have agreed to a \$191.25 increase to the base student allocation (BSA). These are the funds that offer school districts the most flexibility and can be used to pay for salaries and benefits. While the BSA increase is nearly double what Gov. DeSantis proposed in his budget request, it falls far short of what students, educators and school communities need.

This budget reaffirms the desire of Florida's elected leaders to keep per-student funding in the bottom tenth in the nation and teacher pay in the bottom five- effectively ignoring the desires of most of Florida's voters. Survey after survey shows that by overwhelming margins Floridians want Florida's teachers to be in the top ten in the nation in average teacher pay.

We'll have a more complete update on the budget next week once it has been finalized. Be on the lookout for FEA's End of Session Report that will be released shortly after session ends and will

contain a compressive look at the budget for K-12 and higher education.

Missed opportunities on deregulation

In our [Frontline newsletter after week one](#) of this year's session we wrote, "Time will tell if Gov. DeSantis ever gets the courage to stand up to the shadow governor or if he will continue being Jeb's puppet on education issues." We now have our answer: Gov. DeSantis is stuck in the past and unwilling to adopt policies supported by large majorities of Floridians.

This week, the House unanimously passed two "deregulation" bills that stripped almost all of the provisions that would help students and educators that were in the Senate version. Among the items the House stripped out are provisions that would immediately help with the teacher shortage by allowing instructional personnel to once again earn multi-year contracts and provisions that would reduce some of the high-stakes consequences associated with standardized testing.

It's always frustrating when good policy gets sacrificed for purely political reasons and that's exactly what happened here. We also know that it is common for policy to be heard and rejected for multiple years before it ultimately crosses the finish line. The work has already begun to make sure these good policies return next legislative session, and we'll continue fighting for them however long it takes for them to become law.

Continued attacks on teaching honest history

We've written before about HB 1291, a bill that censors the teaching of honest history and denies the reality of systemic racism. Today, we're going to keep our words brief and encourage you to [listen to the remarks of Rep. LaVon Bracy Davis](#) (D-Ocoee) who passionately debated against the bill Friday morning.

HB 1291 passed on a vote of [81-31](#). The Senate companion, SB 1372 has not yet been placed on the special order calendar—a prerequisite for it being heard on the Senate floor. We will continue to fight to make sure this bill doesn't make out of the Senate.

Attacks on teaching honest history, part two

Tuesday afternoon the struggle for the freedom to teach played out quite differently in two parts of Tallahassee. Faith leaders and educators from around the state gathered in the Florida Department of Education where they held a [press conference](#) demanding Florida rewrite its African American History Standards.

At the same time the press conference was happening, the Commissioner of Education's African American History Task Force met just a few miles away at Florida A&M University. Ostensibly a

public meeting, the Department of Education [did their best to keep the public away by not sharing an agenda or even the location of the meeting.](#)

Members of the task force who have been recently appointed by Commissioner Diaz staunchly defended the standards. Long-term members of the task force pushed back on the standards, however. One of their main criticisms is that the standards do not include any of the rich history of Africa prior to the Atlantic slave trade. As one of the task force members put it, starting African-American history with enslavement creates a “deficit mindset.”

FEA and our locals will continue to fight for your freedom to teach and for Florida’s standards to provide students the truth about our nation’s past so they have the knowledge and skills necessary to create a better future.

If you have questions about the African American History standards, you can check out the [FAQ we published at the start of this school year.](#)

Attacks on workers and their unions

As you recall, SB 1746 passed the Senate last week. This bill would add burdensome requirements to public employees who want to join their union. The House has yet to take up the bill, but they are certain to do so before session ends.

If you are fed up with legislators attacking working people and their unions, [sign this petition](#) to let elected officials know. Instead of attacking public employees and our unions, they should be working with us to make Florida a place where every worker can afford to pay their bills, take care of their family and be empowered to do their jobs.

Thanks!

Again this week, FEA members from around the state came up to meet with lawmakers and lobby for real solutions for a better life. We appreciate the members of the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association, United School Employees of Pasco, Seminole Education Association, Volusia United Educators, Washington County Education Association and Escambia Education Association.

How You Can Take Action Today

Visit the [FEA website](#) to learn more about session and sign up for FEA Action Alert texts by texting “**edactivist**” to 22394.

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