

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2025 Legislative Session

January 31, 2025

A quick review of the week

In every major news publication in Florida, you can read about this week's palace intrigue between the legislature and Gov. DeSantis. Our Frontline newsletter won't focus on the political in-fighting; instead, we'll focus on how this week's special session and the passage of **SB 2** will impact you.

Read on to learn more about

- The human cost of SB 2,
- The economic cost of SB 2,
- What happens next, and
- Our thanks to those people and organizations who spoke out against SB 2.

The human cost of SB 2

For more than a decade now, Florida has offered in-state college tuition to children who grew up in Florida and graduated from a Florida high school, regardless of their immigration status or the immigration status of their parents. That legislation came into being through then-Governor Rick Scott, under a republican-majority legislature. SB 2, if signed into law, would remove that right.

There are up to 7,000 students currently enrolled in a Florida college whose in-state tuition status could be stripped from them next semester because of SB 2. But this doesn't just impact college students. Any student in a Florida high school right now who is undocumented and was on track to go to a Florida college or university and pay the in-state tuition rate would have that option ripped away from them. As the Florida Policy Institute points out in a **recent report**, "It is improbable that young immigrants would still pursue higher education in Florida if the out-of-state fee waivers were repealed and they were forced to pay out-of-state rates."

You might be thinking that this is a good economic move, that our state will save money somehow and will be able to recoup some sort of “loss”. We encourage you to read on for an economic breakdown of what this bill will cost you. In reality, SB 2 denies college access to students so that Florida can fall in line with President Trump. Lest you think that is hyperbole, SB 2 is officially named the TRUMP act.

If you are an educator reading this- if this bill is signed into law, what will you tell your students who come to you after they realize their lives are being used as chess pieces in a political match? How do you think our state will be better off by denying access to college for students? Share your thoughts with us.

At the PreK-12 level, we know there are a lot of questions and concerns about the potential for immigration raids at schools.

As you may have heard, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a **directive** titled *Enforcement Actions in or Near Protected Areas* that rescinds **previous guidance** around “protected areas” and allows ICE enforcement to happen in formerly protected areas like schools, places of worship, medical facilities, places where children gather, places where disaster relief is happening and more.

In light of this, Sen. Carlos Smith (D-Orlando) **filed an amendment** to SB 2 to prohibit immigration enforcement actions at public schools and religious institutions. Smith specifically pointed out this amendment was necessary due to the new federal guidance.

Unfortunately, that amendment failed.

This means that SB 2 has no language that actually protects our students.

Despite there being no language in the SB 2 that explicitly protects children while on school campuses, legislative leadership in both chambers repeatedly offered assurances that SB 2 does not allow ICE agents into our public schools. It is up to us collectively to hold their feet to fire and hold them accountable to keeping their word.

Our job as educators is to provide children a safe place to learn, grow and be a kid - regardless of race, status, religion or gender. We do not support using our schools as a political stage and stand united with diverse communities to make Florida the greatest state in the nation and a safe place for every child.

In light of the federal actions, both our national unions have shared guidance on immigration. We shared the guidance in last week’s Frontline and are resharing it again below.

AFT: **[Right of Immigrant Students, Deportation Guide and Immigration Guide](#)**

NEA: **[Guidance on Immigration Issues](#)**

For specific questions that are not covered in the guidance from our nationals, you can reach out to FEAs legal department for further guidance if you are a member.

The economic cost of SB 2

FEA has long maintained that our state has the money necessary to pay every educator fairly so that everyone who works in Florida's schools can live comfortably while working only one job. Our **legislative agenda** calls for Florida to move from #50 in the nation in average teacher pay to #10. Legislative leadership continues to suggest there simply isn't enough money in Florida's budget for that to happen. This week, however, those same leaders miraculously found **one-half billion dollars** they could use for "immigration enforcement."

On a vote of **82-30** in the House and **21-16** in the Senate, legislators passed SB 2 a mere five hours after the text of the bill was released. The final version of SB 2 was not heard in a single committee and a legislative analysis was not completed before the bill was passed.

Because the process was so rushed, we still do not know the final cost of the bill. What we do know is that the cost will be at least \$500,000,000. That amount is just for this fiscal year which ends on June 30. This means legislators allocated at least **\$100,000,000 per month** for immigration issues. To put this in perspective, the funds allocated in this bill would have been enough to give every teacher in Florida a nearly \$3,000 raise. Tell us, what could your community do with an extra ONE HUNDRED MILLION dollars?

Gov. DeSantis' budget recommendation to the legislature must be submitted by Sunday, Feb. 2. It was widely assumed he would release the budget this week instead of waiting until the weekend, but as of the sending of this email he still has not released his proposed budget.

But, we'll go ahead and predict that his proposal will keep Florida ranked #50 in the nation in average teacher pay. When you look at your property insurance and notice it going up, when you are at the grocery store and notice the produce and eggs increasing in price, when you sit down to look at your monthly budget and notice it stretched a little too thin for comfort, we would encourage you to call your legislators and ask what they are doing to lower costs for Floridians. Ask them how they can find half a billion dollars for federal issues but not find money to hire more counselors and nurses in our public schools, make sure children are able to eat at schools throughout the summer, or pay educators so they don't have to work two or three jobs just to support their families.

What happens next

As we mentioned above, we know your main concern is not the bickering between policymakers, but how the policies will impact you and your students. We did want to offer a preview of what may happen next. For that reason, below are some thoughts on how the GOP in-fighting is likely to play out.

It seems a virtual certainty that **Gov. DeSantis will veto SB 2** when the bill hits his desk. As of the writing of this email, the legislators have not yet formally sent the bill to DeSantis. There is no timeframe for when DeSantis will be presented with the bill so he can take formal action on it.

It's too soon to know if SB 2 will become law or not, or whether this special session is the last that is called before regular session commences on March 4.

Thanks to the fighters

As we mentioned above, this adoption of SB 2 was a very rushed process done mostly behind closed doors. Nonetheless, college students from as far away as Orlando dropped what they were doing to come testify in committee and stand up for the rights of their classmates who are targeted by this new bill. We salute all of those who spoke up and spoke out against this bill.

In addition to the individuals who spoke against the bill, we thank the following organizations who opposed the bill in committee: ACLU of Florida, Americans for Immigrant Justice, Florida AFL-CIO, Florida Center for Fiscal & Economic Policy, Florida Faith Advocacy Office, Florida Immigrant Coalition, and Southern Poverty Law Center of Florida.

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.

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