

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2025 Legislative Session

May 2, 2025

With the chambers adjourning at 10:33 p.m. tonight, the 2025 legislative session is mostly over. All policy bills that did not pass before the two chambers adjourned this evening are now dead.

The budget, however, is a completely different story. Before they adjourned today, legislators extended session until June 6 for the purpose of developing a budget.

Where do we go from here?

By not finishing the budget on time, legislators have given us a valuable opportunity. For much of the past sixty days legislators have been in Tallahassee largely shielded from the discontent of the Florida residents they were elected to serve.

From now until they finish their work on the budget, many legislators will be back home in their districts.

If legislators return home to their phones ringing off the hooks, constituents showing up at their offices and inboxes flooded with emails demanding a better budget, the heat they feel from their constituents will directly lead to a better budget.

Whatever happens with the final budget, our pressure must be relentless and year-round. Legislators have once again proposed a budget that keeps Florida teacher pay at #50 in the nation. That they proposed a budget to slash funding for AP, IB, CAPE and more in the first place is a sign they've gotten entirely too comfortable ignoring the needs of their communities. It's up to us to make them hear us.

So close, yet so far

In what was a whirlwind of a session, FEA remained focused on getting the [priorities of our members](#) across the finish line. Even on the last day of session, there was a chance several of our priorities would pass in both chambers and head to the governor's desk.

SB 166 would have made two very important changes that focus on retaining teachers by increasing job security. First, the bill allowed teachers and other instructional personnel to earn multiyear contracts. No longer would teachers have to live in fear at the end of every school year that their annual contract will not be renewed. Secondly, the bill eliminated burdensome red tape by allowing teachers to earn a 10-year teaching certificate. Early in session SB 166 passed the Senate unanimously. But, a House version was never filed.

In the closing days of session, the Senate amended the language of SB 166 into two House bills, HB 1105 and 1115, in the hopes that the House would finally agree to take up this legislation to address the teacher shortage. Alas, after 6 p.m. on Friday night when the House finally took up these bills, they amended the bills to remove the provisions of SB 166.

To make matters worse, when the House removed that good language they also added in some very bad language. SB 140/HB 123, related to conversion charter schools was unable to make it through the regular legislative process. But, at the last minute the House added the provisions of SB 140 to HB 1105. Shortly after 9:30 p.m., the Senate agreed with the House and [passed HB 1105](#) with the conversion charter school language and without the language from SB 166.

For one of our higher education priorities, the story is basically the opposite. The House passed HB 1321 on [a nearly unanimous vote](#) two weeks ago. This bill would have placed college and university presidential searches back into the sunshine. The Senate did move a watered down version of the bill through the committee process, but never placed either version of the bill on the Senate floor.

When legislation that helps students, educators and school communities gets a vote, inevitably that legislation passes with overwhelming support. The bottom line, though, is that corporate interest groups like Jeb Bush's foundation still have a lot of influence and control over the legislative process. They essentially wield veto power by exerting their influence to keep good legislation from passing both chambers.

Our mission is to continue to build the power we need to force legislators to put the will of the people over the will of their corporate donors.

Charter school chaos

One of the hallmarks of this session was the large number of proposed bills to favor charter schools over neighborhood public schools. In fact, it was sometimes a bit of a struggle to keep up with all of the charter school legislation that was moving this session.

Now that the dust has settled, two of the three major pieces of charter school legislation passed. The one charter school bill that did not pass is HB 1267 related to charter school co-location.

Almost every teacher in Florida has had the experience of a student entering their classroom midway through the year after being kicked out of a charter school. These students almost always are kicked out after the charter school has already received the funding for them.

While there are some laws in Florida to discourage this practice of allowing charter schools to select their students, Rep. Alex Rizo (R-Hialeah) sponsored HB 443 which moves in the opposite direction. Under this bill, it will be even easier for charter schools to cherry pick the students they want to teach while discarding the rest.

Among other things, this bill allows charter schools to adopt stricter codes of conduct than public schools. When asked repeatedly what this would look like in practice, Rep. Rizo only provided one answer: that his bill would allow charter schools to ban vaping. That is, of course, an insult to your intelligence.

Opponents of the bill are rightfully worried that this bill will encourage charter schools to adopt codes of conduct that will allow them to expel students based on their hairstyle, their clothing, and other discriminatory reasons. If this sounds hyperbolic, it's important to know that Florida's voucher schools already [kick out students based on their hairstyle](#). It's not hard at all to imagine that charter schools will follow suit now that they've been given the mechanism to do so.

In addition to HB 443, the conversion charter school provisions of SB 140 passed as well as we described in the section above.

Thanks!

Each week, we've ended with thanking the educators who have come up to Tallahassee to meet in person with legislators. This week we want to thank you, the Frontline readers and education advocates who work tirelessly to advocate for Florida's public schools!

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.

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