

DTU Legislative Update

2019 Legislative Session

Week 5 Day 32

April 5, 2019

Halfway Done and All Downhill

Wednesday marked the halfway point of the 2019 legislative session. We were gearing up for a massive fight in the House on everything from budgets, vouchers, classroom teachers being able to carry a weapon in classrooms, to more bonus proposals. The Speaker must have known how prepared we, and in turn, our friends in the House were, because he decided to Temporarily Postpone (TP) all but the budget bills.

Budgets Getting Budget-y

This was budget week! Both the House and Senate spent time on the floor of their respective chambers to ask questions, propose amendments, debate and ultimately vote on their chamber's budget packages. Usually the House will place a bunch of bills on the calendar along with the budget called "conforming bills" that are usually substantive policy changes tied to major appropriations within the budget. This year that included [HB 7093](#) – the school safety package, [HB 5101](#) – the education spending bill that revamped Best & Brightest and made changes to vouchers, and [HB 7075](#) – legislation to create a new voucher in Florida and also changed existing vouchers.

As stated previously, Speaker Oliva decided to TP the bills, citing the Senate's request to keep policy and budget separate (Thank You Senate Members). All that means is that HB 7093, HB 5101 and HB 7075 will likely be heard on the House floor Wednesday, April 10.

This means you have some extra time to contact YOUR legislators and tell them to **VOTE NO** on bills that fail to properly pay teachers and all instructional personnel an adequate salary rather than bonuses (HB 5101); **VOTE NO** on legislation that would allow a classroom teacher to be armed, rather than ensure that highly trained law enforcement are protecting students and employees (HB 7093); and **VOTE NO** on legislation that would remove more than \$200 million in funds (in the first year alone!) from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) which directly funds public schools in Florida in order to allow students to take a voucher to a private, religious school (HB 7075). [You can find your legislator here.](#)

After a lengthy debate on Wednesday, the Senate passed their \$90.3 billion [budget](#) by a vote of 40-0. As you may recall, the Senate's preK-12 education budget is a \$1.1 billion increase over the current fiscal year budget, including a per-student funding increase of \$350 (to \$7,778.79) and a Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase of \$149.40 (\$4,353.82).

On Thursday, the House passed their [budget](#) proposal which is \$400 million less in total spending than the Senate proposal by a vote of 105-08. Again, the House's preK-12 budget is woefully short of the Senate's proposal, with a per-student funding increase of \$167.79 (to \$7,596.58) and a BSA increase of \$38.34 (\$4,242.76). Remember that the House and Senate both artificially increase their per-student funding amounts by including \$268 million and \$233 million, respectively, in Best & Brightest (B&B) bonuses inside the FEFP (you may recall in the current and previous fiscal year budgets B&B funding is located outside the FEFP and therefore does not count towards per-student funding). The House per-student funding increase is based almost entirely on the B&B funding shift.

In higher education budget news, the House also falls short in funding for our colleges and universities. The House budget proposal for colleges is basically flat with no real increase in funding and continues the performance funding of \$60 million, half of which is state investment and the other half being the institutional investment. The House cuts university Education and General operating budgets by over \$100 million or a 2.5% reduction of their base operating budgets.

The 2019-20 Senate budget proposal for colleges increase operating funds in two categories. First, there is a \$15.5 million increase in "Compression" funds for colleges funded below the statewide average. Second, there is a \$22.5 million increase in operating funds to all colleges. Performance funds in the Senate's budget proposal are being replaced by Student Success incentives. \$28 million is allocated to a 2+2 Student Success Incentive and \$12 million to a Work Florida Incentive Fund. The Senate spends \$285.3 million more for universities than the House for a total university budget of nearly \$6 billion.

So what's next for the budget? We now wait for the speaker and senate president to announce budget conferees and the budget conference calendar. The budget will go to conferees first, to hammer out the differences in line items between the House and Senate's proposal. Once all budget line items are agreed to, or if they can't be agreed to, the line items will "bump" to the House and Senate budget chairs. If the budget chairs can't agree, the line items will "bump" again to the speaker and senate president to be worked out. The final budget will then be placed on member's desks for the mandatory 72 hour "cooling off period" in which legislators (in theory) have time to read the bill and lobbyists (in practice) share why the final budget is either a good or a bad product and urge legislators to vote up or down the budget. This is a weeks-long practice so we'll be keeping you posted throughout.

Secrecy in Higher Ed?

Here is another one of those twilight bills that just doesn't seem to die despite having been killed in previous sessions.

The State Affairs Committee on Tuesday dropped a Proposed Committee Bill (PCB) [SAC 2](#) that would create an exemption from Florida's public records and open meetings laws for any personal identifying information of an applicant for state university or Florida College System (FCS) institution president or provost. The bill keeps applicant names secret and outside the Sunshine Laws, exempts the applicant's name from public disclosure in records or during meetings held for the purpose of vetting applicants, and requires the release of the finalist list no later than 30 days before the date of the meeting at which a final action or vote is to be taken.

Secrecy is not in the best interest of our universities and colleges, especially when it comes to choosing the leadership. The people of the state of Florida—especially students and their parents—deserve the right to know how their tax dollars are being spent and how major decisions that affect these public institutions are made. To quote Barbara Petersen, President of the First Amendment Foundation: "To shield the selection process from public oversight and accountability is, we believe, bad public policy." It probably also comes as no shock that in previous years when this bill was considered by the Legislature, nearly every newspaper editorial board wrote editorials in opposition to this proposal.

The State Affairs Committee held this controversial bill to the very end and then rushed it through. The bill passed the State Affairs Committee 16-5, with only one democrat, Rep. Wengay Newton (D-St. Petersburg) voting in favor. Currently there is no Senate companion but that doesn't mean one won't appear in the coming weeks.

It's Starting to Heat up in Tallahassee...

The weather is literally getting warmer, and the temperature and heat in the building is starting to rise. Big thanks to representatives from Alachua, Dade, Hillsborough, Levy, Palm Beach and Pasco counties who came to Tallahassee this week to meet with legislators regarding education issues.

Friendly reminder: We are working closely with the AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps to lobby legislators in Tallahassee on pro-public education issues and against anti-union legislation. If you haven't already, be sure to let us know via the [AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps "I'm coming"](#) link when to expect you, and book your hotels ASAP.

If you have any questions about coming to Tallahassee, please don't hesitate to contact Tina Dunbar at Tina.Dunbar@floridaea.org. Remember that your visit to Tallahassee should include proper Capitol attire – suits, slacks, button up shirts and/or ties for the men; dresses or slacks and blouses for the ladies; and especially comfortable dress shoes for everyone. We also recommend you bring a light jacket or sweater, and an umbrella. Tallahassee weather is notoriously unpredictable for spring, not to mention committee room temperatures!

Questions...Call PPA at 850-224-2078