

DTU 2020 Legislative Update

Week 4 - Day 25

February 9, 2020

Closing Out Week Four

The bills and budget work around Tallahassee never ends.

Bills, Bills and More Bills

You can tell it's week four – traditionally this is the last week House subcommittees will meet to vet legislation, and the committee agendas were packed in the House as bill sponsors and chairs tried valiantly not to let bills die.

The [Senate Education Committee](#) met Monday and passed [SB 1320](#) by Senator Janet Cruz (D-Tampa), which if it became law would ensure that state universities would waive most school fees for graduate assistants who teach or do research at all state universities. Graduate assistants teach up to a third of all undergraduate courses at our universities, yet they pay back to the university one fourth to one half of their small graduate assistant stipend on fees. The bill is a top priority for the United Faculty of Florida. UFF-FSUGAU President Adela Ghadimi, UFF President Karen Morian, FSU Chapter President Matthew Lata and UFF-TCC VP Martin Balinsky testified in support of the bill in committee. We are happy to report that the bill passed unanimously.

On Thursday, the [House State Affairs Committee](#) took up Proposed Committee Bill (PCB) [SAC 04](#), which was filed late Tuesday night, creating an exemption for records and meetings relating to the process of selecting state university and college presidents. Considering Florida is the #1 higher education system in the nation, the sponsors of the PCB and SB 774 argue that we could have had better applicants for our colleges and universities if the process wasn't done in the sunshine. Let's be clear, every university president hired since the late 1960s was hired in the sunshine, so are the sponsors now saying that President Fuchs at UF and President Thrasher at FSU, among others, weren't the best applicants for the job?

[SB 774](#) by Sen. Diaz (R-Hialeah Gardens) passed the Senate Education Committee by a 6-1 vote, with only Senator Lori Berman (D-Boynton Beach) voting against. PCB SAC 04 passed the State Affairs Committee.

Don't forget to visit the [2020 Legislative Session](#) page on the FEA website to track important bills and get talking points as well.

Budget

For those of you who are lucky enough not to have to know the inner workings of the Florida budget process, let me give you a quick overview of where we are. The House and Senate appropriations committees present their committee's proposed budget (that occurred last week). The budget then goes to the appropriations committees of each chamber (that occurred this week). Both the House and Senate must pass their respective chamber's budgets off the floor after members have had a chance to file amendments (that will occur next week – week 5).

After each chamber has voted for their respective budget the presiding officers – Speaker Oliva and President Galvano – will meet to agree on the major budget allocations (the dollar amount they must work with for education, health care, transportation, etc.). Once the allocations have been agreed to, both chambers will name the budget conferees and budget conference will begin (usually that occurs somewhere between weeks 6 through 8). Budget conferees will then bump unresolved issues to the appropriations chairs, and appropriations chairs will bump unresolved issues to the speaker and Senate president before a final approved product is placed on each member's desk for the mandatory 72-hour cooling off period. Once the cooling off period has been met, both chambers will vote on the one budget before them.

Check out this great article by Lloyd Dunkelberger on the issue of [raising public school teachers to a starting pay of \\$47,500](#).

So what does this mean for the issue of “will I get a raise next year?” The two chambers have very different plans. There are a few things we do know, such as both chambers have scrapped bonuses and neither chamber has invested enough to ensure meaningful raises for all educators. There are a lot of unknowns as well. We created a flowchart to make it as easy as possible for you to see where you fall in the current plans. You can also visit our FEA website to see the [handy dandy flow chart of should I expect a raise](#)

[next year](#). And then be sure to contact your state representative and senator to let them know what you think of the pay plans proposed so far.

Please remember that we still have a long way to go in the budget process and a lot can change between where we are today and where the final budget will be in five weeks. Your input to your legislators is crucial in helping us advocate for a fair and equitable salary increase for ALL educators, is sustainable, and ensures that decisions regarding pay are done locally between the school board and the bargaining unit.

[Are You Coming to Tallahassee?](#)

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 when to expect you via the [AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps "I'm coming" tab](#), 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 or slacks and button up shirts and 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 winter, not to mention committee room temperatures!

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.