

DTU

2020 Legislative Session Update

Week 5 - Day 32

February 14, 2020

Is Love in the Air?

We are now past the halfway point of the 2020 legislative session. Cupid may be shooting his arrows for you, but for us we're still trying to feel the love from the Legislature with regards to the budget and bills that take away union rights.

Honoring the Lost and Never Forgotten



February marks the two-year anniversary of one of the most tragic and horrific mass shootings in American history. We are taking a moment to remember the fallen and lost Eagles of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

This week Rep. Dan Daley (D-Sunrise) invited MSD graduate Ian Witlen to display images from his project “Anguish in the Aftermath: Examining and Mass Shooting,” which were displayed in the Capitol Rotunda on the fourth floor. His images were powerful reminders that this tragic event affected so many. Today and always, we are with our BTU family and the families of MSD High. #MSDStrong.

[Bills](#)

As we enter the second half of the session, we remain focused on our primary asks, to **Fund our Future** and fund the *Decade of Progress* we have called for to make salaries a priority, ensuring local decision-making on these salaries and ensuring everyone from our pre-K to universities be included. While that is our focus, we can't ignore the myriad other issues being discussed.

The FEA team is currently tracking 265 bills moving through over 20 committees in both chambers. They are analyzing and advocating for our members on all these issues. A short list of these topics touched on in the past few weeks includes:

Union busting	Collective Bargaining, and Local Control
Salary and Benefit Enhancements	The Florida Education Finance Program and the Bas
School Safety and Security	Student Allocation
Guns on School Campuses	The District Cost Differential
School Bus Safety	Public Records
University Presidential Searches	Florida Retirement System
Graduate Student Fees	Parental Rights
Performance Funding/Bonuses	School Board Term Limits
Voucher and charter school expansion	Instructional Personnel and Support Staff Discipline
Private School and Charter School Accountability	Teacher Certification and Licensure
Pre-K Testing and Accountability	Professional Development and Inservice training
District Accountability	Mental Health
Value Added Model (VAM)	Student Health Services
Educational Standards, and Assessments	The Florida Best and Brightest Program
School Grading System and School Turnaround	Annual Contracts and Due Process
Seclusion and Restraint	Cost of Living Adjustments
Required Instruction	

Our ability to be relevant on so many fronts is a credit to the advocacy of the FEA members and leaders. Thanks for what you have done and for the continued work through the end of session, March 13.

The anti-union legislation, [HB 1](#) was heard in the House [State Affairs Committee](#) on Thursday. A strong showing of union representation – teachers, bus drivers, higher ed faculty, public sector unions, nurses, police and firefighters – stood together in opposition to the bill. While amended by the sponsor, the bill still requires the employer to verify whether an employee who signed up to be in the union actually does, in fact, want to be in the union. It also still prohibits the union from asking why someone no

longer wants to be a member of the union. As one speaker stated so perfectly, “If the founding fathers had to wait on the British to verify signatures, we’d still be under British control 200 years later.”

Even as amended, Rep. Javier Fernandez (D-Coral Gables) said it best in the previous committee stop: “I think this bill is really about one thing and one thing only. It’s about union busting, and there’s really no other more polite way to characterize it. This bill is not happening in a vacuum. It’s not just happening in Florida. This is part of a concerted effort, a national effort by one organization or handful of organizations advancing an agenda to basically try to erode union membership. They do that by erecting barriers to membership under the guise of worker protection.”

We thank the following FEA leaders and members who spoke in opposition to the bill: Martin Balinsky, United Faculty of Florida-TCC; Karen Cunningham, United Teachers of Dade; Kevin Daley, President of the Teachers Association of Lee County; Amy Hawkins, Volusia county teacher; Justin Katz, President of the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association; Matthew Lata, President of the United Faculty of Florida FSU; Marshall Ogletree, United Faculty of Florida; Margarite Sandy, St. Lucie County retired educator; and Dawn Walker, Lake County teacher. The bill passed committee 12-7 and will now head to the House floor. The companion legislation, [SB 804](#) has yet to be heard in any committees of reference in the Senate.

The [Senate Education Committee](#) met Monday and passed [SJR 1216](#) by Senator Gruters (R-Sarasota) by a party-line 5-3 vote, which limits the term of school board members to 8 years. We find it only mildly ironic that most members on this committee advocate for “choice” in schools, vouchers, charters, etc. yet refuse to let voters have a choice as to who represents them and for how long on the school board. Senator Montford (D-Tallahassee) stated, “If parents can make the choice for their children then they should make the same decision for who should represent them at the school board.” Senator Cruz (D-Hillsborough) also pointed out; “It is only for school board members, not clerks of court, sheriffs, or property appraisers. Schools are complex and institutional knowledge would be lost. The fact we’re only targeting school boards is a red flag, is legislating from Tallahassee and undermining the will of our local communities.”

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

As you may recall, last week's Update, we gave you a pretty lengthy run down on the budget process. This week both chambers had their respective budgets and implementing bills on the floor. A LOT of questions and debate was spent on the issue of who will and who won't get a raise this session under the House and Senate's budget proposals. Ultimately each chamber passed their respective budgets unanimously. The passage of the chambers' budgets now puts us in the proper posture of heading to budget conference.

If you are thinking to yourself, what can I do at this point to make sure the final FY 2020-2021 budget is fair to all educators, is sustainable and ensures the rights of collective bargaining? Over the next week you are encouraged to contact [YOUR Senator](#) and [YOUR Representative](#) and share your story of the role you play in Florida's schools and how many years you've worked there (If you're inclined, include what you make after all those years of experience, too!).

Tell your legislators, as a constituent, you respectfully request that they advocate for a budget that is fair for all educators who work every day to improve the lives of Florida's students. From our prekindergarten to grade 12 classroom teachers who care for and teach our students; to the office staff who register students, administer medication, and call home for students when sick; to the support staff that works with struggling students; to the paraprofessionals who assist our classroom teachers with student learning; to all the certificated staff who work with identifying, placing, and assisting our exceptional education students in order to provide the best learning environments, to those working with troubled youth and their families and so many more, they all deserve a decent wage reflexive of what they do each day and year after year.

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.

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