

DTU 2021 Legislative Update

2nd Interim Committee Week

Jan. 29, 2021

Another Week, Another Set of Ideas:

Today completes the second week of the 2021 interim committee weeks and the Senate is moving fast! While the House still chugs along with their committee presentations, the Senate is moving at the speed of light to pass their policy ideas.

Governor Announces his \$96.6 Billion Budget:

It was business as usual for the announcing of the governor's proposed budget. Early Thursday a.m., he announced a near-record budget amount and outlined his recommendations for the education budget.

Now remember, the Governor proposes and the Legislature implements the budget. So, the numbers below are just really placeholders and don't mean all that much at this point. It does give us a starting point to work with legislators and budget appropriators moving forward.

The governor's budget did not get the hatchet the way some were predicting. Instead, he proposed cutting the budget a little over \$1 billion in the next two years. It does not appear, however, that he is taking into account the long-range fiscal impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on revenue for the state. This makes up large parts of the budget. We have been hearing about a \$3-5 billion shortfall to be reflected in the budget as legislators start building the budget in the coming weeks.

Budget Highlights:

- \$50 million increase to the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation Categorical – for a total of \$550 million (dedicated funding source for teacher and staff raises)

Please Note: The \$500 million is a statewide allocation to be used to sustain the recently negotiated beginning salaries in all Florida districts. The DCPS beginning salary for teachers recently increased to \$45,891. The additional \$50 million allocation,

again statewide, is earmarked to continue increasing that salary to the original state suggested beginning salary of \$47,500 and to fund new teachers to the districts at that \$47,500 salary. **This will not be enough funding to also increase salaries for veteran teachers.** Remember, this is the Governor's suggested budget. The Legislature will also produce a budget. From there, a final budget must be agreed to for implementation.

- \$132 per-student increase of the Base Student Allocation (unincumbered funds districts use primarily for raises and benefits)
- \$10 million increase for mental health initiatives – for a total of \$110 million
- \$43.5 million to establish a Title I School Recognition Program. This is likely to be in bonuses for Title I schools based on student performance. Watch for this policy initiative to be rolled out this session.
- \$318.5 million for public education capital outlay (building and maintenance funds that have been totally syphoned off for charter schools)
- For the first time in years, the Required Local Effort (RLE) will be maintained rather than being rolled back. This will become a revenue generator for local school districts.

So, what's next you ask? Now legislators will begin meeting in their appropriations committees and will present a proposed budget for their respective area of the budget. The appropriations chairs of the House and Senate will then compile their chamber's budget proposal where legislators will vote. Once a final budget has been voted on by both chambers, the real fun begins. Deal making will lead to one final budget product that both chambers will either pass or reject. Then, the FY 2021-2022 budget will be sent to the governor for his final approval, veto, or what usually happens – line item vetoes and then approval.

Senate Education:

Not to be outdone, our higher education folks had quite the week in the Senate. The Senate [Education Committee](#) heard [SB 264](#), requiring an intellectual freedom survey on campuses, and [SB 52](#) which takes university presidential searches out of the sunshine. These bills are identical retreads that we helped kill last year - the only differences are the bill sponsors.

SB 52, by Sen. Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg), would take the current very open university presidential search process and restrict it so that the public would only know

about the final three candidates chosen. Until just recently, across the country, ALL presidential searches were open. This bill passed with a [7-3](#) vote.

Capitol Protocols:

In the last Update, we informed you of the current Capitol protocols for the interim committee weeks. Senate President Wilton Simpson (R-Spring Hill) has limited any public appearances in the Senate – and is not permitting legislators to meet with lobbyists or the general public in the Capitol. We have now learned that President Simpson is keeping this protocol for the session as well.

We also informed you that House Speaker Chris Sprowls (R-Clearwater) had taken a more lax approach, limiting individuals in the building. He is still permitting meetings with legislators, by appointment only, and you must be escorted to and from the Capitol rotunda by the staff or legislator with whom you are meeting. The speaker has not announced session protocols yet, but we would assume this would continue to be the case.

As you can imagine, this makes lobbying in Tallahassee nearly impossible, unless you have already built a working relationship with legislators. It is also why we are suspending any lobbying corps programs for this year. Instead, we are encouraging members, who wish to do so, to meet with legislators at home.

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