



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

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House Appropriations Committee Focuses on School Safety in the Wake of Parkland Tragedy

What transpired in Parkland two weeks ago was a heartbreaking tragedy. In an effort to ensure this never happens again, the House Appropriations Committee passed HB 7101 that comprehensively addresses this issue.

The bill addresses firearm safety, school security, inter-agency information sharing and coordination, mental health, and victim's privacy. This bill is the result of numerous conversations across the aisle and with constituents. Additionally, this bill includes a mandate for in-depth investigations into every facet of this issue in order to find out what went wrong and how it could have been prevented.

In addition, the Florida House also voted to issue subpoenas to local agencies regarding any interactions those agencies had with the accused shooter, as well as information regarding the response by the agencies to the shooting incident. It is our duty to protect our citizens, and I promise that when it comes to keeping Florida's children safe, no issue is too big or complex.

Florida House Combats Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in Ethics Reform Package

The Florida House passed a bill this week that proposes important ethics reforms that includes the strongest anti-sexual harassment policy for state employees in the nation. There is no place in our capital city, our state, or the workplace for unacceptable and unwanted behavior.

Additionally, the bill prohibits state and local officers or employees from soliciting a conflicting job; requires disclosure and reporting on offers of conflicting employment; requires state legislators and statewide elected officers to disclose changes in employment and pay raises immediately when the employer has interests in the legislative process; and imposes a two-year ban on former agency directors from lobbying any state agency.

Never again should one's job title or position of power shield them from accountability for this disgusting behavior. We must protect the dignity of victims and witnesses, and ensure they will not be bullied or intimidated. It is time for the culture of corruption and silence on this issue to end and people to be held accountable. The bill will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

House Passes Bill to Crackdown on Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Government

This week, the Florida House of Representatives passed HB 7073, dealing with government integrity. This bill will enhance government integrity by implementing mechanisms to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse. These mechanisms include creating a permanent, professional office within the Office of the Auditor



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General for the purpose of identifying, investigating, and recommending the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement and related misconduct in government.

Additionally, the bill broadens Florida's Whistle-Blower Act, ensures state agencies reward employees when they report waste, fraud, and abuse and their complaints result in savings for the state, strengthens the state procurement law, and much more. The bill also allows the Chief Financial Officer's office to commence a fraud investigation based on a complaint or referral from an employee of a state agency or state contractor. Furthermore, the bill prohibits state or local tax incentive funds from being used to award or pay a state contractor or subcontractor for services provided or expenditures incurred pursuant to a state contract.

We have shown our commitment to bringing the people of Florida the most effective, efficient, and transparent government possible. The bill will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

The Florida House Passes Bill to Increase Budget Transparency

This week, the House passed HB 7057 to address transparency in, and access to, the operating budgets of state entities. Currently, state agencies are required to submit their operating budget and budget requests to the Legislature for the upcoming year through the State budget. However, some state entities are not reliant on the state budget, and thus, their budgets are not subject to the same scrutiny.

This bill requires any statewide entity created by law or the State Constitution and that is controlled or operated by the Governor or the Governor and members of the Cabinet, or is related to a department of state government, to follow specific steps that provide transparency if the entity receives its operating income through a funding source other than through the state budget. The operating budget must be approved at a publicly noticed meeting and must be available on the entity's website at the time the meeting is noticed. Once approved, the operating budget must be submitted to the chairs of the legislative appropriation committees and the Executive Office of the Governor by July 1 of each year. The bill also requires operating budget information to be posted to the state entity's website.

I believe that without transparency and accountability in our government, we will never be able to secure and maintain the public's trust. This bill ensures that trust by guaranteeing all budgets of these entities are available to the public. I support this bill because I believe Floridians have the right to know where and how their tax dollars are being spent. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

House Passes Bill to Strengthen Florida's Emergency Management Laws

This week, the Florida House passed HB 7083, which revises various provisions relating to the state's comprehensive emergency management plan and emergency management readiness and response in Florida that will help our state greatly during the next storm.

Some of the bill's provisions include: extending the number of days state employees can be authorized leave during an emergency from 15 to 20 days; requiring county emergency management plans to include a fuel contingency plan and to provide detailed information on shelters; and prohibiting a public entity



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from holding a public meeting during a declared state of emergency while a curfew is imposed to discuss or vote on its budget. The bill also directs the Florida Department of Transportation, railroad industries, and fuel industries to collaborate and create a study examining options to use railroads as a means to transport and store fuel to areas impacted by a hurricane.

This bill ensures our state is properly prepared for emergencies and any minor, major, or catastrophic disaster. I support this bill and pledge to continue to fight to keep Florida strong in times of natural disasters. This bill will now head to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House Passes Health Care Disaster Preparedness and Response Recommendations

This week, your Florida House passed HB 7085 which addresses several health care-related recommendations from the Select Committee on Hurricane Response & Preparedness.

In September 2017, Hurricane Irma posed an unprecedented threat to the state and a severe test of existing emergency preparedness and response protocols. Testimony in the select committee revealed that some nursing homes, assisted living facilities, home health agencies, nurse registries, and other entities caring for Florida's most vulnerable populations were not fully prepared for a disaster.

The bill addresses special needs shelters and registry; health care facilities' inspections, penalties, and emergency management planning; emergency management planning by home health agencies and nurse registries; services for individuals with developmental disabilities; emergency curfews; and new requirements for the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Department of Health. The full text of the bill it is available at <http://bit.ly/2EYb7Gq> . The bill will now go to the Senate for its consideration.

I strongly support the efforts of the committee to prepare our state for the next hurricane. I will continue to update you as your Florida House works to protect our community and state.

Florida House Votes to Protect the Sanctity of Life

This week, the Florida House passed HB 1429 to prohibit dismemberment abortions.

A dilation and evacuation (D&E) abortion is a two-step process consisting of the nonsurgical dilation of the woman's cervix and the surgical evacuation of her uterus. D&Es commonly involve dismembering the fetus with forceps as part of the evacuation procedure. Usually, the fetus is alive when this dismemberment begins. The bill fully defines this part of the procedure, known as a dismemberment abortion, but the details may be too graphic for some readers. If you would like to view the full text of the bill it is available at: <http://bit.ly/2DsIVL4>.

HB 1429 makes it a crime and a licensure violation for a physician to dismember a living fetus.

The bill does not prohibit D&Es; only dismemberment of a living fetus as part of that procedure. The bill does not apply to a dismemberment abortion that is necessary to save the life of a mother, provided that



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no other medical procedure would suffice for that purpose. The bill also prohibits the state from prosecuting a patient for conspiracy, when a dismemberment abortion is performed on her.

Your Florida House is committed to protecting the unborn. The destruction of a living fetus by dismemberment runs contrary to the values we hold dear. This conversation - while difficult - is one from which the Florida House will not shy away when innocent life is at stake. The bill will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House passes bill to Strengthen Florida's Ban on 'Texting While Driving'

This week, the House passed HB 33, Texting While Driving, which makes the existing ban on texting, emailing, or instant messaging while driving a primary offense. Currently, law enforcement officers must detain a driver for another traffic offense in order to cite him or her for violating the ban. By making the existing ban on those activities a primary offense, law enforcement officers will be able to detain a motor vehicle operator solely for texting while driving. The bill maintains the current penalties and exceptions to the ban, and maintains that the ban does not apply to stationary motor vehicles.

The bill also includes safeguards to protect individuals' privacy rights by ensuring law enforcement officers follow certain protocols before they can access a driver's wireless communications device during a traffic stop for a violation of the ban. Finally, the bill requires law enforcement officers to record the race and ethnicity of persons cited for violating the ban on texting while driving and directs the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to compile this information and annually report the data to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Texting and driving presents a real, life-threatening danger to Floridians both on and off the road. I believe that providing law enforcement the ability to enforce the 'Texting While Driving' ban as a primary offense will help save lives. I'm confident that this bill strikes the appropriate balance between roadway safety and protecting our individual civil liberties. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House Passes Opioid Bill

This week, your Florida House passed HB 21 to target the opioid crisis affecting our nation and state. Drug overdoses now represent the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., the majority of which involve an opioid. In Florida, heroin caused 952 deaths, oxycodone caused 723 deaths, and hydrocodone caused 245 deaths in 2016.

HB 21 limits prescriptions for Schedule II opioids to alleviate acute pain to a three-day supply, or a seven-day supply if deemed medically necessary by the prescriber. The bill creates exceptions to the prescribing limits for cancer, terminal illness, palliative care, and serious traumatic injury, and requires co-prescribing of emergency opioid antagonist for the latter.

The bill authorizes DOH to share data in Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) with other states, and requires practitioners to review PDMP history prior to prescribing or dispensing certain controlled substances, enforceable by a citation the first time and licensure action each time thereafter.



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I strongly support the efforts of the Florida House to pass policies that will bring a resolution to opioid addiction and suffering. This crisis requires all of us to take a stand and help our family, friends, and community. If you would like more information on this bill please contact our office. If you or someone you know is suffering with an opioid addiction please contact 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Passes Prescription Drug Transparency

The Florida House passed HB 351 this week, which prohibits certain practices within Florida's pharmacy process that limit patient access to pricing information and requires pharmacists to disclose the lowest cost available for a customer's prescription drug.

The bill requires pharmacists to communicate to a patient the availability of a more affordable alternative drug if one exists and whether the patient's cost sharing obligation exceeds the retail price for a covered prescription drug. The bill also requires a contract between a pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) and a health plan to limit the amount the patient pays for a drug to the lesser of the applicable cost sharing amount or the retail price in the absence of prescription drug coverage.

Under this bill, your local pharmacist will have the freedom to disclose your true prescription drug cost options. The bureaucracy surrounding pharmacy care and management will be prohibited from applying any mechanism preventing you from paying the lowest applicable price for a particular drug. Decrease red-tape, decrease health care costs.

Your Florida House is dedicated to passing legislation that will ensure that Floridians are presented with all the facts about their prescription drug costs. I strongly support this measure because it will increase access to quality and affordable health care for all Floridians. The bill will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House Passes Bill Addressing Self-Sufficiency

This week, your Florida House passed an important pro-family bill that makes changes to Florida's Temporary Cash Assistance Program (TCA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to encourage families to be self-sufficient: HB 693.

About 3.3 million Floridians currently receive food assistance through SNAP. HB 693 ends a change to SNAP made in 2010 during the devastating economic downturn. That change helped more people qualify for food assistance in that tough time. Fortunately, our economy has improved since then— for example, the state's unemployment rate has fallen from 11.4% to 3.6%.

Under the bill, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) must seek federal approval to implement a resource limit of \$5,000 in counted assets. The bill also requires DCF to verify assets to prevent errors and fraud. The resource limit and verification will help ensure that assistance goes to those who are truly in need.



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The bill also creates pilot programs at three or more regional workforce boards to increase employment opportunities for TCA recipients who face significant barriers to employment. Creating these pilot programs will help TCA recipients become “work ready” and support their families.

I believe encouraging families to be self-sufficient is something we can all get behind, and that is exactly what this bill would do. The bill will now go to the Senate for its consideration.

Florida House Passes Public Assistance Reforms

The Florida House passed HB 751 this week, which addresses matters relating to public assistance, to implement new work requirements for Medicaid recipients.

The bill directs the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to seek federal approval for work requirements in the Medicaid program. New federal policy guidance indicates such a request would be approved, if state proposals focus on working age, non-pregnant, non-disabled Medicaid recipients, and take into consideration recipients who are caregivers for young children or elderly family members or who live in high unemployment areas. This bill would align the Medicaid work requirements with those for the food stamp and cash assistance programs, to streamline the eligibility process and take advantage of federally-funded workforce assistance.

If AHCA obtains federal approval, the Legislature’s approval would then be needed to impose the new Medicaid work requirements.

Your Florida House is dedicated to passing legislation that will encourage Floridians to be partners with the state in working toward better health and self-sufficiency. The bill will now go to the Senate for its consideration.

Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018 Passes House Committee

This week, the Education Committee passed HB 423, which establishes the Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018. The goal of HB 423 is to maintain and improve the quality of higher education in Florida.

The bill revises multiple student financial aid and tuition assistance programs. One of the biggest changes is to the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship. Specifically, the bill will cover the full cost of tuition and fees plus a stipend of \$300 for books for the Florida Bright Futures Academic Scholars award. The Florida Medallion Scholars award will cover 75% of the full cost of tuition and fees. The bill also expands the Benacquisto Scholarship to include qualified out-of-state students and increases funding for the First Generation Matching Grant Program. I believe the increases and expansion of these scholarships will provide more students with the chance to pursue and achieve their higher education goals.

HB 423 also requires the Board of Governors (BOG) to provide the Legislature with recommendations for future consideration on the most efficient process to achieve a complete performance-based continuous improvement-funding model. The model should be focused on outcomes and provide for the equitable distribution of performance funds. The Legislature will also review recommendations from an



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independent entity that must consult with the BOG to receive input on behalf of the state university system.

The bill also increases oversight of state university direct-support organizations (DSO), by revising the appointment and approval process for members of a DSO board of directors, increasing public access to records, and requiring that university transfers of any state appropriation to direct-support organizations by a board of trustees may include only funds pledged for capital projects.

Additionally, to promote the free flow of ideas on our state university campuses, the bill clarifies that an individual's expressive rights may not be infringed upon, and that an institution is prohibited from restricting expressive activities to a particular area of campus and prohibited from designating free speech zones. If an individual believes their expressive rights have been violated by a postsecondary institution, they may seek declaratory and injunctive relief, including reasonable court costs and attorneys' fees.

I proudly support this bill and any effort to strengthen our state university system, hold them accountable to the students and the taxpayer, and continue to give opportunities to all students.