



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

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House Leadership Unveils Hope Scholarship

Every student deserves access to a safe environment. In the 2016-17 school year, over 47,000 Florida public school students were victims of incidents such as battery, bullying, harassment, hazing, physical attacks, and sexual assault, battery and harassment.

This week, your Florida House unveiled The Hope Scholarship program that creates a pathway for students who are subjected to an act of violence or abuse at school to pursue their education with hope, dignity, and an opportunity for success.

I believe this program allows students to get away from an unhealthy situation and empowers parents to choose a school where their child will thrive in an environment that is conducive to learning.

House Committee Meets to Discuss Future Hurricane Response and Preparedness

This week, the Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness met for the first time in the wake of Hurricane Irma's landfall in Florida. The Select Committee was created to assess our state's recent experience and pinpoint ways to improve Florida's hurricane readiness and response capabilities. During the meeting, the committee heard presentations from the Division of Emergency Management, several counties on their experiences during Hurricane Irma, and the Office of Insurance Regulation.

I am honored to be a member of this committee and I look forward to finding new ways to ensure our state is prepared to weather the next storm.

House Committee Votes to End Public Tax Dollars Going Towards Funding for Stadiums

The Government Accountability Committee passed HB 13, which would end the practice of wasting taxpayer dollars to subsidize sports franchises on public lands, while also ensuring these organizations are held accountable by requiring them to pay outstanding debts if they no longer use their stadiums.

Floridians take great pride in their sports teams, but I believe they should not have to see their hard-earned tax dollars fund stadium construction or renovations on public land. In Florida, 80% of professional sports franchises have facilities on public land that taxpayers subsidize to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. These deals have been financial disasters for taxpayers; for example, public dollars have financed as much as 125% of total stadium costs in four Florida cities alone.



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I proudly support this measure because I believe taxpayer dollars should be used wisely, and if these teams want to build or renovate stadiums, they should do so with private dollars.

House Committee Passes Professional Deregulation Bill

This week, the Commerce Committee met for the first time and passed a bill seeking to deregulate certain professions. The goal of the bill is to provide more job opportunities for Floridians while protecting their health and safety.

The bill allows certain professionals to practice their chosen profession without obtaining licensure from the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, reduces the hours of training required to obtain certain licenses, and eliminates the requirement that certain professionals obtain a separate license and pay additional fees for their businesses.

There are numerous professions effected by the bill, including: hair braiders; hair wrappers; body wrappers; boxing announcers; boxing timekeepers; labor organizations; barbers; restricted barbers; nail specialists; facial specialists; full specialists; nail polishers; and makeup applicators. In addition, the following licensed professionals will no longer have to pay an additional fee to obtain a separate license for their businesses: architects; landscape architects; geologists; interior designers; asbestos abatement consultants; and yacht and ship brokers (branch offices only).

I fully support professional deregulation because it removes unnecessary government barriers, is a key component in allowing businesses to grow more easily and will create more job opportunities for Floridians.

House Committee Votes to Repeal Red Light Cameras

This week, the Appropriations Committee passed HB 6001 to repeal the authorization for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and local governments to install and maintain red light cameras. The decision follows a review of the 2015-2016 Red Light Camera Summary Report, which shows an *increase* in total crashes and injuries at intersections with red light cameras.

I support the repeal. Although the intent behind red light cameras may be positive, the data shows they do not work.

House Committee Receives Update on School Accountability

On Tuesday, the Education Committee received an update of Florida's School Accountability System from the Florida Department of Education (DOE).

For decades, Florida has used standards and assessments that have contributed to increasing levels of achievement by our students and schools. Florida's standards are unique to our state and designed to prepare students for success in higher education and the workforce.



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DOE issues both schools and districts letter grades based on student performance on the annual statewide standardized assessment. The presentation highlighted that 57 percent of all schools graded in 2016-2017 earned an “A” or “B”, up from 46 percent in 2015-2016. Additionally, DOE reported that 78 percent of “F” schools improved their grades and that the total number of “F” schools decreased by more than half.

These encouraging statistics lead me to believe that Florida’s school accountability system is working. I look forward to supporting any measure that will improve these numbers and will further ensure that all children in Florida receive a high quality education.

House Committee Passes Bill Focused on Local Government Fiscal Transparency

This week, the Ways & Means Committee passed a bill to increase local government fiscal transparency.

HB 7 focuses on helping citizens gain access to important information so they can be more engaged on important government decisions. Some of the bill’s provisions include: improving access to voting records related to local option taxes and debt issuances; enhancing access to tax history and property tax information; expanding public notice requirements; and improving local government reporting requirements for economic development incentives.

I am proud to support the bill because Floridians deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent.

House Committee Passes Bill to Support Florida’s Veterans

The Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Committee passed HB 107 to support Florida’s 1.5 million veterans. Currently, there is no uniform veteran identification (ID) card that can be used as proof of military service for obtaining discounts at stores or waivers from various license and registration fees. The bill fixes the problem by creating a new veteran's ID card that would be available to any honorably discharged veteran of any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. With this new card, Florida’s veterans can easily prove their veteran status and enjoy the benefits they have earned.

I believe that Florida should do everything in its power to honor its veterans who have sacrificed so much for our country. This bill continues our mission of making Florida the most veteran-friendly state in America.

Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program Study

The FTC Scholarship Program expands educational opportunities for children of families with limited financial resources by offering scholarships to help students achieve a better education.

A recent study found that FTC scholarship students who utilized the scholarship for four or more years were 37 to 43 percent more likely than similarly disadvantaged students in public schools to attend college. The study also revealed that students who entered the scholarship program in their elementary school years and were on the scholarship for four or more years were 29 percent more likely to earn an associate degree than similarly disadvantaged students in public school.



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I believe this study speaks volumes to the effectiveness of the FTC Scholarship Program and its mission to ensure that all students, no matter their background, have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.