



# HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

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## **The “Don Hahnfeldt Veteran and Military Family Opportunity Act” Passes House Floor**

This week, the Florida House passed HB 29, which eases many professional licensing fees and requirements for certain military members, veterans, and their spouses.

A military and veteran presence will forever be important to our state. These brave men and women not only place themselves in harm’s way to protect our freedom and liberty, they are also a stable and significant force in Florida’s growing economy.

We are grateful to those courageous Floridians who have made the selfless decision to serve our country. We will never be able to repay them for the sacrifices they have made, but in an effort to express our gratitude, the bill will provide allowances for military members, veterans, and their spouses by expanding or creating fee waivers and select regulatory waivers for a variety of professional licenses.

The bill also designates March 25 every year as “Medal of Honor Day” and allows classroom instruction related to the values of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor to meet certain instructional requirements on character development and the contributions of veterans to our country. I believe this goes a long way towards ensuring that future generations appreciate the sacrifices made to protect our freedoms and liberties.

I proudly voted for this bill because I support any measure that strengthens support for our military and veteran community and gives them the opportunity to succeed in Florida’s workforce. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

## **House Passes Bill To Observe Daylight Savings Time Year-Round**

This week, the House passed HB 1013, a bill addressing Daylight Saving Time in Florida. The United States Congress established a uniform standard of time under the Uniform Time Act of 1966. The act created standard time zones across the United States and adopted a national standard for Daylight Saving Time.

Federal law permits states to be exempt from observing Daylight Saving Time but does not permit states to observe Daylight Saving Time year round. This bill creates the “Sunshine Protection Act” and declares the Legislature’s intent to observe Daylight Saving Time year-round throughout the entire state of Florida if the federal government permits it. This will benefit Floridians by allowing them more daylight during peak hours, which will boost the economy by increasing tourism, as well as leisure activities in which individuals and families participate. Studies have shown that having more daylight will improve public safety on our roads and can improve mental health.



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I support this bill to bring more sunshine, happiness, and health to all citizens in the great Sunshine State of Florida. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

## **Florida House Ways & Means Committee Passes Florida First Tax Proposal**

This week the Ways & Means Committee passed the 2018 Tax Cut Proposal that will put the needs of Floridians first and foremost.

The committee passed a bill to cut taxes for millions of Floridians. Under this tax package, families and students, business owners, farmers, military and servicemembers, and others will receive a tax cut from the Florida House. The following are some highlights of the tax proposal I am proud to support:

- Helps make education more affordable with a ten-day **Back-to-School Holiday and expansion of funding for the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship and Gardiner Scholarship Programs.**
- Reduces the **Business Rent Tax** for businesses.
- Provides relief to farmers with the **Hurricane Irma or Citrus Greening Property Tax Reduction, Fuel Tax Exemption, Hurricane Reconstruction Tax Exemption (Building and Fencing Materials).**
- Protects Florida's families and homes from natural disasters with the **Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, Generators for Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities, and Homestead Property Relief.**
- Honors the 1.6 million veterans and their families in Florida with updates to **Veteran-specific Ad Valorem Exemptions.**

This bill makes a substantial contribution to improve the prosperity and opportunity for all Floridians. I strongly support this bill because it puts Floridians first.

## **The House Appropriations Committee Passes Bill to Increase Budget Transparency**

This week, the Appropriations Committee advanced 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 forthcoming 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 from taxpayer money 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.



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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.

## **House Subcommittee Passes Criminal Justice Data Reform**

This week, the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee passed HB 7071 that expands the collection of criminal justice data, and brings uniformity to the data across the state. Unfortunately, the existing data collection process is either inconsistent across agencies and departments or lacking crucial information. As a result, we have been flying blind while attempting to implement criminal justice reforms.

This bill will bring Florida to the forefront of the nation in terms of criminal justice data collection. This will help us locate and diagnose trends in crime and law enforcement, while bringing unprecedented insights into policymaking. By collecting accurate, valid, and reliable data, we can accurately tailor future crime prevention legislation, creating a pathway to a safer Florida.

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

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

We have shown our commitment to bringing the people of Florida the most effective, efficient, and transparent government possible. I am proud that we have continued these efforts, and I look forward to keeping you informed of the progress of this bill.

## **Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Votes to Protect the Sanctity of Life**

In the fourth week of the 2018 Legislative Session, the Florida House Health & Human Services Committee 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>.



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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 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.

### **Committee Passes Bill To Strengthen Florida's Emergency Management Laws**

This week, the Government Accountability Committee passed a bill that 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 from holding a public meeting during a declared state or local emergency while a curfew is imposed. 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.

### **Florida House Appropriations Committee Passes Bill Addressing Self-Sufficiency**

The Appropriations Committee 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 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 fell from 11.4% to 3.6%. Under the bill, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) is required to seek federal approval to implement a resource limit of \$5,000 in counted assets. The bill also requires DCF to perform asset verification to prevent errors and fraud. The asset 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.

## **Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Passes Prescription Drug Transparency**

This week the Health & Human Services Committee passed HB 351, 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.