



# HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE DANE EAGLE, MAJORITY LEADER

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## **Florida House Republicans Congratulate Gov. DeSantis and Lt. Gov. Nunez**

This week Florida celebrated the inauguration of Governor DeSantis and Lt. Governor Nunez. The ceremonies shared a vision for a bolder Florida. The Florida House looks forward to working with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Florida Senate in continuing our steadfast progress of lowering taxes, creating a favorable regulatory climate, providing the best education for our children, and protecting our unique and precious natural resources. By working together to accomplish these goals, I believe Florida will look forward to an even brighter future.

## **Florida House Ways & Means Committee Reviews Florida's Growth and Revenue Outlook**

This week, your Florida House Ways & Means Committee prepared for the upcoming Legislative Session by reviewing Florida's Growth and General Revenue Outlook.

The forecast for Florida's economy expects continued good growth. For example, over the next six years we expect our real personal income per capita to increase by 6%, tourist visits to increase by 25%, and real estate activity to increase by 38%. Even with these great forecasts we must remain diligent in our spending; that is why we will continue to keep tax burdens low while furthering our state's excellent record of fiscal responsibility.

Reflecting Florida's economic outlook, the state's General Revenue forecast also anticipates good growth. Our state's tax structure is one of the main reasons why our state has excelled since the Great Recession and why we have had nine years of fiscally responsible general revenue growth. We have work to do to ensure that your hard earned tax dollars are continued to be spent wisely and that the state is prepared for any future difficulty.

Your Florida House will remain dedicated to protecting your money and resources. We are the stewards of the state revenue and must do our utmost to protect taxpayer money.

## **House Commerce Committee receives positive overview of Florida's Economy**

This week, the Commerce Committee received an overview of Florida's economy from the Office of Economic & Demographic Research.

The presentation highlighted many positives for Florida's economic environment. These highlights include that Florida's gross domestic product, or GDP, has been on the rise with posted growth of 4.0% in 2015, 3.2% in 2016, and 2.2% in 2017, and 4.5% in the second quarter of 2018. GDP is the sum of all goods and



services produced over time and is used to indicate the health and size of an economy. Florida's GDP also continues to outpace the national average for economic growth. Florida's unemployment rate has also continued to drop, decreasing to 3.3%, which is lower than the national unemployment rate of 3.7%.

I believe these statistics show why Florida's total GDP recently hit the \$1 trillion mark. In order to put that achievement in perspective, if Florida were a country it would have the 17<sup>th</sup> ranked economy in the world. In my view, cutting taxes, balancing our budget, and maintaining a strong environment for job creation, will keep Florida on the path of prosperity.

### **Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee Presents on Water Quality Policies**

This week the Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee met to discuss Florida's current environmental policies related to the Springs and Aquifer Protection Act, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and the most recent update on Senate Bill 10 (2017), the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir Project.

For the past several years, the frequency and intensity of harmful algae blooms in Florida have been increasing, especially in central and south Florida. Excess nutrients flowing into the state's water resources have fueled algal bloom. These events have negatively affected coastal estuaries, lakes, creeks, springs, wildlife, economies, health, and tourism. A disruption in Florida's water quality is a disruption in Florida's way of life.

We have been fighting to fix our water quality issues. The Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act was passed in 2016 to add additional measures to protect our Outstanding Florida Springs by addressing the quality and quantity of water in our springs and aquifers. This act created a systematic process for assessing all Outstanding Florida Springs, delineating priority focus areas, identifying pollution sources, and finally adopting basin management action plans for affected areas. Because of this act, 145 projects have been implemented across our state to protect and maintain our natural springs.

Another way we have fought to combat these issues is through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). CERP is an extensive plan, with 67 projects, that aims to restore, protect, and preserve Florida's water resources in central and south Florida. A handful of these projects are planned for completion within the next 5 years. In 2017, Senate Bill 10 expedited the EAA Reservoir Project to store water south of Lake Okeechobee. Once these projects are complete, Florida's water quality will see significant improvement.

Water quality and environmental issues are critical to sustaining Florida's great way of life. The Florida House is committed to addressing water quality issues and we will work hard to ensure the citizens of this state have pristine water systems for generations to come.



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## **PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee meets for the first time**

The PreK-12 Innovation subcommittee received an overview of the state's Office of Early Learning and discussed the various scholarships offered in Florida and how they are helping our children succeed.

The Office of Early Learning is responsible for implementing the state's School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education programs. These programs ensure that children and families in our state have access to affordable and quality early learning options. In my view, these programs are essential to setting our children up to succeed and be ready for kindergarten.

The subcommittee also received a presentation on state scholarship programs available to students from PreK through grade 12 in Florida. The various programs offered in our state include the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, the McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities, the Gardiner Scholarship Program, the Hope Scholarship Program, and the Reading Scholarship Program. We also learned that research indicates scholarship programs promote positive impacts on student achievement for students choosing private school options as well as those remaining in the public schools.

I believe the right of parents to choose the best educational options for their children is of paramount importance to their prosperity, and the meeting clearly showed that the more educational choices parents have for their children, the better.

## **Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Starts the Year Focused on Medicaid**

This week, your Florida House Health & Human Services Committee prepared for the upcoming Legislative Session by addressing an important health care topic: Medicaid.

The Committee was briefed on the state of Florida's Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program by Beth Kidder, Deputy Secretary for Medicaid Agency for Health Care Administration. She explained that Florida Medicaid serves about 4 million of the most vulnerable Floridians: 1. 7 million adults - parents, elderly, and disabled - and 47% of children in Florida. Medicaid covers 63% of birth deliveries and 61% of nursing home days in Florida.

For the last five years, Florida's SMMC program has been very successful. These successes can be seen in improved health quality outcomes, high patient satisfaction, and increased opportunity for individuals needing long-term care to transition from nursing facilities to their own homes or other community living. Florida's quality scores now get better every year, after many years of no improvement at all.

The Florida House Health & Human Services Committee is starting this year focused on Medicaid, not only to speak to our state's successful management of the program, but to challenge our Florida government to be accountable, bolder, and more patient-focused.

Your Florida House is dedicated to increasing access to quality and affordable health care for all Floridians. If you would like to view the full presentation of the meeting packet it is available at: <https://bit.ly/2QxEgdi>



## **House Committee Receives Overview on School Improvement**

On Thursday, the PreK-12 Quality subcommittee received an overview of Florida's school improvement process from the Florida Department of Education (DOE). The presentation showed that changes to Florida's Differentiated Accountability system (DA) for low performing schools are working for Florida's students.

Education reforms adopted in 2017 require Florida school districts to respond quickly to schools that receive a D or F grade by implementing a turnaround plan in the first year after receiving the grade. Statistics presented to the subcommittee show that 68% of DA schools graded D or F in 2017 improved their grade in 2018, 94% of DA schools graded F in 2017 improved their grade in 2018, and 59% of the first-year turnaround DA schools improved their 2018 school grade to a C or better and exited DA. In the two years after HB 7069 reforms passed, the number of schools in DA have been cut in half.

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

## **Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee Updates on Recent Legislation**

This week the Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee received an overview of recent legislation relating to occupational licensing and education benefits for our veterans, military personnel, and their spouses.

In 2017, HB 615 provided various benefits for military members and their spouses in the form of license fee and permanent license waivers. Since taking effect, the bill has resulted in 2,910 applications for fee waivers, which has provided a savings of \$198,498 to our military families.

In 2018, HB 29, the Don Hahnfeldt Veteran and Military Family Opportunity Act, expanded fee waivers for certain regulatory programs as well as waived renewal fees for certain veterans. Since taking effect, hundreds of military and veterans' license fees have been waived.

These brave men and women not only put their lives on the line to protect our freedom, but also serve as a significant force in Florida's growing economy. I hope to continue building upon the measures our legislature has taken to support our military and veteran communities to ensure Florida continues to be the most military friendly state in the country.

## **Higher Education & Career Readiness Subcommittee talks Career and Technical Education and State Financial Aid Programs**

This week, the Higher Education & Career Readiness subcommittee heard presentations from the Florida Department of Education (DOE) on career and technical education in both the Florida College System and technical colleges/Centers as well as state financial aid programs.



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The Florida College System and the technical colleges/centers in Florida provide postsecondary access to students of all ages and from all walks of life. In particular, students can pursue postsecondary certificates, industry certifications, and associate degrees that lead to high skill/high wage employment. The committee expressed a strong desire to strengthen workforce education opportunities for students, and I support the Governor's sentiment in his inaugural speech that career education is vital to the state's economy.

In addition, Florida offers many state-funded programs to increase access to postsecondary education. The financial aid programs do this by: rewarding Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement, providing funds to students who may not otherwise be able to afford postsecondary education, and offering student's opportunities to pursue careers in both technical and academic fields. A few of the state financial aid programs offered include the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Programs, the Benacquisto Scholarship Program Florida Student Assistance Grants, the Florida Work Experience Program, the Effective Access to Student Education Grant Program, and the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant.

I believe through these scholarships, Florida is able to give all students a pathway to achieve their goals and pursue higher education. I will proudly support any measure which ensures a bright future for Florida's next generation.