

BROWARD LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

NEWSLETTER

2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Broward Legislative Delegation Office provides a communication resource between the Federal, State, local governments and Broward County citizens to facilitate the legislative process. Our responsibilities include maintaining an efficient means for the local bill process and monitoring bills approved by the Delegation Members through the Legislature. The Legislative Delegation has a responsibility to monitor the appropriations process, securing State Revenues and other allocated funds for programs, organizations and government agencies in Broward County.

Week 5: Feb. 5- Feb. 9

SIMILAR SIZED BUDGETS; HB-7055 PASSED

Florida's House and Senate both passed competing budgets on Thursday that, while not far apart on the money, are philosophically opposed about how to pay for schools, hospitals and affordable housing. The House passed its \$87.2 billion budget on a vote of 85-27 after a highly-charged partisan debate that foreshadowed bigger election-year battles ahead, mostly on education.

Republicans cited a \$100-per-student increase in public school spending, a larger Medicaid program and more money for state colleges, foster care and hurricane-related improvements, without raising taxes. In the upper chamber, Senators passed an \$87.3 billion budget on a 33-to-1 vote, with state Sen. Jose Javier Rodriguez, D-Miami, the lone holdout. Both budgets are roughly \$4 billion more than last year.

At this stage, the budgets reveal less about how the state will spend taxpayer money next year and more about what House Republicans, led by Speaker Richard Corcoran, and Senate Republicans, led by President Joe Negron, are willing to bargain with over the coming weeks.

Senators slammed the brakes on Corcoran's top priority, a massive rewrite of education policy that Corcoran tried to strong-arm through the House by tying it to passage of the budget.

Senators used procedures that prevents the House from linking the two, and it forces the Senate to slow the momentum of the bill, House Bill 7055, and require it to pass through multiple Senate committee hearings.

"The House understands that the Senate would prefer to have these policies move through the traditional process, and not linked to the budget," Negron said.

Perhaps nothing this session has stoked more outrage than HB 7055.

The bill includes a provision that threatens teachers' unions, which Democrats are strongly against. It includes one of Corcoran's top priorities, "Hope Scholarship" vouchers to allow bullied students to move to different schools, criticized as another gift to private schools at the expense of public schools.

But the budgets also ensure a clash over how the state pays hospitals to care for Medicaid patients: The Senate plan, which the House opposes, would result in more money for for-profit hospitals and less for so-called "safety net" hospitals, like Miami's Jackson Memorial and Tampa General.

Under the Senate's funding system, Jackson Memorial could lose \$59 million, Tampa General would lose \$14 million and **Broward Health would lose about \$17 million, according to an analysis from the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida.** Meanwhile, the House and Senate can't agree over affordable housing, considered crucial in a state with housing shortages and a high populations of renters, especially in South Florida. The Senate wants to use all \$320 million that is set aside for such housing, but the House bill takes \$182 million of that to fill budget holes and pay for other programs.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

House Democrats repeatedly blasted the GOP majority for the "sweeps" of that money.

"These sweeps are not only wrong, they ought to be illegal," said Rep. Joe Geller, D-Aventura.

Rep. Carlos Trujillo, R-Miami, dismissed the Democrats' criticism as "political theater."

As the two-month session moves beyond the midway point, one voice in the budget process has been largely silent. Unlike last year, Gov. Rick Scott is not openly battling his fellow Republicans in the Legislature over money for jobs and tourism.

However, Scott's priorities for 2018 are still not fully funded. A case in point is tourism. Scott wants \$100 million for Visit Florida, the tourism promotion agency. The House offers \$76 million and the Senate \$50 million.

Scott says the money pays for promotion to keep tourists coming to Florida, but some lawmakers are skeptical, so he'll need to twist some arms to get the full amount.

To build support for the higher figure, Visit Florida CEO Ken Lawson, a Scott appointee, is urging tourism executives to lobby lawmakers.

But one of Scott's priorities — money to fight the opioid epidemic — has widespread support. The House has \$50 million set aside for treatment, prevention and enforcement, and a Senate bill is expected to include at least that much.

<http://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/buzz/2018/02/08/florida-house-and-senate-pass-similar-sized-budgets-but-fights-are-ahead/>

On this week Broward County elected officials, business owners, and friends gathered in Tallahassee for Broward Days 2018. The event was informative, engaging, and FUN!

We are extremely thankful to our Sponsors for your gracious support and we are so proud of our mighty Board Members for their hard work and dedication to the success of this year's event. Enjoy the photos below.

More Photos to come at www.browarddays.com.

Please make plans to join us in 2019.



Madam Chair Nikki Fried



State Senator Gary Farmer greets the Broward Days Delegates at our Annual Breakfast held this year at the Florida Professional Firefighter Headquarters. Senator Farmer also serves as Chair of the Broward Legislative Delegation.



Broward Legislative Delegation Office - Executive Director: Andrea C. Knowles

Broward Governmental Center, 115 South Andrews Avenue, Room 429, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

Office Number: 954.357.6555

Fax Number: 954.357.6041

Email: DelegationInfo@broward.org

Website: www.broward.org/legislative

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