



Governor Approves State Budget

On May 24, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed into law the Fiscal Year 2007-2008 state budget passed by the Florida Legislature. Senate Bill 2800 represents the state's funding priorities for the coming year and provides \$71.5 Billion to pay for the expenses associated with those priorities. Before approving the budget, Governor Crist vetoed over \$450 million the Legislature had directed for specific projects, including over \$6.6 million for projects in Broward County. The projects vetoed included money for education programs, social services programs, public safety assistance and equipment, and water-related infrastructure projects. The specific Broward projects Governor Crist vetoed are identified below:

- \$100,000 – Hallandale Beach After School Tutorial Program
- \$50,000 – Lauderdale Lakes Educational & Cultural Resource Center
- \$50,000 – Intergenerational Day Care Center
- \$25,000 – S.H.I.N.E. (Service Health Insurance Needs of Elders)
- \$280,000 – Pediatric Dental Residency (Nova Southeastern University)
- \$250,000 – Tamarac Youth Recreation Center Project
- \$100,000 – City of West Park Law Enforcement and Fire Rescue Assistance
- \$150,000 – Pembroke Park Emergency Operations Center Equipment
- \$210,000 – Southwest Ranches Emergency Vehicle
- \$800,000 – Broward County Initiative (SFWMD C-11 Basin projects)
- \$450,000 – Davie Wastewater Improvements
- \$500,000 – Lauderdale Lakes Stormwater Improvement Project Phase 3
- \$600,000 – Lauderdale-By-The-Sea Bel Air Sewer Improvement

- \$300,000 – Lauderdale Holiday Village Water Main Replacement
- \$250,000 – Lighthouse Point Stormwater System
- \$250,000 – Pompano Beach Chlorine System Conversion
- \$300,000 – South Broward Drainage District Hurricane Wilma Erosion Project
- \$500,000 – Tamarac Stormwater Improvement Project
- \$100,000 – Lauderdale Lakes Northgate Park Project
- \$1,300,000 – Las Olas Streetscape
- \$200,000 – Broward County Drug Court

Elections Bill Becomes Law

Governor Crist signed CS/HB 537 (now Chapter 2007-30, Laws of Florida) into law on May 21, 2007. Among its many provisions, the act moves the Presidential Preference Primary to the last Tuesday in January, requires that all voting be conducted by marksense ballot (paper based) as of July 1, 2007, and authorizes the Florida Secretary of State to purchase optical scan and ballot-on-demand voting equipment for the 15 counties with touchscreen voting machines.

Conflict Counsel Legislation Approved

Despite the calls for a veto of CS/SB 1088, Governor Crist signed the bill into law on May 24, 2007. Chapter 2007-62, Laws of Florida, as designated by the Secretary of State, creates an Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel in each of the state's five judicial districts and requires that counties provide such offices with facilities including maintenance, utilities and security, communication services, technology, and other county funded items as currently provided to the offices of the public defender. The Legislature has appropriated almost \$6.0 million to fund the Regional Office in the Fourth Judicial District (Broward, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm

Beach and St. Lucie Counties) for FY 2007-2008 and authorized 63 new staff positions for the office of which 32 are expected to be in Broward County.

Local Bill Becomes Law

HB 783 became law on May 24, 2007. State law presently prescribes the membership of local public safety coordinating councils created pursuant to §951.26, Florida Statutes. The act adds the Clerk of Courts to the membership of the Broward County Public Safety Coordinating Council and requires the Board of County Commissioners to make the appointment. Other annexation and nonannexation local bills that passed the Legislature have not yet been signed by the presiding officers and presented to the Governor for consideration.

Governor Vetoes Bills

Citing the impact on renters, unfair taxation of boaters, and increased costs to the state's Medicaid program, several pieces of legislation that passed both houses of the Legislature fell victim to the Governor's veto pen on May 24, 2007. The vetoed measures include a conforming bill to the budget and are as follows:

CS/HB 1277 relating to residential tenancies. The bill would have provided landlords with the option to charge renters an early termination fee or liquidated damages under specified circumstances in addition to other damages available to the landlord under the rental agreement.

Senate Bill 1104 relating to vessel registration fees. The bill would have imposed a \$2 surcharge on vessel registrations to fund a derelict vessel removal grant program under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

CS/SB 1116 relating to health care. This bill served as the conforming bill for the health care initiatives included in the state budget. Despite containing provisions he agreed with, Governor Crist vetoed the bill due to certain provider-driven changes included at the last minute. Among the objectionable provisions cited were requiring that doctors use certain brand name drugs over less expensive generic brands for transplant patients; eliminating the requirement that behavioral health service providers spend at least 80% of their Medicaid payments on patient care;

and increasing Medicaid providers' rates above the 10% increase the Legislature approved in the state budget (\$218.8 Million).

Property Tax Update

The Joint Select Committee on Property Tax Relief and Reform will meet Monday, June 4, 2007 at the Capitol in Tallahassee, Florida. While expected Republican and Democrat leadership bills have yet to be filed, House members have begun filing legislation for consideration during the upcoming Special Session scheduled for June 12-22, 2007. The Joint Proclamation convening the Special Session states the Legislature is convening for the "sole purpose of considering legislation to reduce and/or restructure ad valorem taxes." Any bill not within the purview of the "call" cannot be considered unless the authorizing proclamation is amended by a 2/3 vote of each house. The bills filed to date are as follows:

HB 11B (Rep. Robaina) – exempts motor and diesel fuels from motor and other taxes during the months of July, August, and September.

HJR 13B (Rep. Allen) – extends the Save Our Homes assessment limitation to all real property and provides that property assessments may be changed annually only if determined to be necessary by the property appraiser based on market data as provided by general law.

HJR 15B (Rep. Domino) – Authorizes the Legislature to limit by general law increases in the assessment of commercial properties to the greater of five percent or the average annual percentage revenue growth derived from the property over the prior three years.

Mark Your Calendar

The Florida Association of Counties Annual Conference will be held in Orlando, Florida, June 12-15, 2007, at the Renaissance Orlando Resort at SeaWorld.