

FLORIDA SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

SENATOR BILL GALVANO, MAJORITY LEADER



This Week in the Florida Senate

January 18-22, 2016

Making Florida the Leader in Employing Adults with Disabilities



SB 962 - Vocational Rehabilitation

Senate Bill 962, Vocational Rehabilitation

To make Florida the national leader in employing people with unique abilities, we need to set specified goals and establish a performance improvement plan for the state Vocational Rehabilitation program to achieve. This week, the Senate worked to establish this policy by unanimously passing Senate Bill 962, Vocational Rehabilitation in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. Senate Bill 962 requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and implement a performance improvement plan to achieve specified goals and annually submit a performance report to the Governor and presiding officers of the Florida Legislature. Establishing metrics that focus on outcomes related to employment and independence will allow Florida to make measurable progress in ensuring people with unique abilities can secure meaningful employment.

Senate Bill 1496, Transparency in Health Care

On Monday, the Senate Health Policy Committee unanimously passed Senate Bill 1496, Transparency in Health Care to promote transparency in health care pricing and quality. SB 1496 provides the general public and consumers with up front estimates of health care services and procedures by a common named service bundle to compare typical health care services provided in hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers. SB 1496 requires the Agency for Health Care Administration to contract with a vendor to create a consumer friendly, internet based platform for searching data about health care costs for specific service bundles.

This bill ensures reliable information about outcomes is shared with patients, strengthens consumer advocacy, and instills penalties for health care providers who do not comply. Providers would be fined double the amount of prices that exceed fair market prices and egregious price gouging could result in a facility's loss of license and closure. To address health care access, quality, and cost of care, both the Senate and House of Representatives have agreed to pursue policy initiatives that promote transparency and market principles to advance Florida's health care.

Senate Bill 160, Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Deployed Service Members

Florida is the most military and veteran friendly state in the nation and this week, the Senate furthered our commitment by passing Senate Bill 160, Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Deployed Service Members. SB 160 designates additional operations for which deployed military men and women can qualify for an ad valorem tax exemption. This legislation allows for a service member to receive the exemption on homestead property for the portion of the preceding calendar year which they were deployed, it extends the application deadline, and includes retroactive language to qualify those service members who were deployed during the 2014 calendar year. The next stop for SB 160 is the Senate floor.

Senate Bill 570, State Park Entrance Fee Holiday

This year marks the 80th anniversary of Florida's award winning park system. In celebration of this monumental year, the Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation filed Senate Bill 570, State Park Entrance Fee Holiday to waive the state park entrance fees for one year beginning July 1, 2016. This week, SB 570, passed its second Senate committee to provide the opportunity for every Florida family to experience and enjoy our state parks located throughout the Sunshine State. SB 570 highlights our state park system as an asset to Florida and a benefit to the people and visitors of our state and stresses the importance of introducing new generations to Florida's exceptional park system.

Senate Bill 7054, Agency for Persons with Disabilities

On Wednesday, the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee approved Senate Bill 7054 to better assist those with unique abilities and their families in receiving services and assistance from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. This legislation clarifies the process used in the development of a client's iBudget and adds transportation as a service to be considered when determining the allocation of funds in a client's iBudget. This legislation will also help our military families who relocate to Florida by allowing certain individuals to receive waiver services here, if the parent or legal guardian is an active duty military service member at the time of transfer and the individual is receiving waiver-based services in another state. SB 7054 provides the agency the ability to assign priority of clients to the waiting list to ensure that those clients who are crisis and need waiver services the most, receive them.