

FLORIDA SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON
MAJORITY LEADER

THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE

APRIL 10 - 14, 2017

Senate Unanimously Passes Budget Focused on Education with Unprecedented K-12 Per Student Funding, Key Investments in Higher Education, and State Employee Pay Raises

The Florida Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 2500, the 2017-18 General Appropriations Act. The budget prioritizes funding for Florida's Pre-K-20 public education system, while setting aside more than \$3 billion in total reserves, and making critical investments in Florida's state workforce with salary increases for state employees.

The Senate's budget ensures that we live within our means and set aside ample reserves. This budget meets the needs of our growing state in a manner that reflects the priorities of Floridians. The link between education and our economy is clear. The best thing we can do to invest in Florida's future is to make certain all Florida children have access to a great education from voluntary pre-kindergarten, all the way through our excellent institutions of higher education.



Senate Bill 2500
Historic Investments
in Student Financial Aid

Restores Highest Level of the Bright Futures Scholarship

79%
Increase in merit-based aid

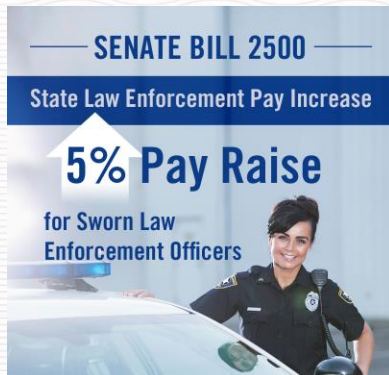
81%
Increase in need-based aid



SENATE BILL 2500

Minimum \$2,500 Pay Increase
for Corrections Officers

The budget includes all key components of the Senate's Excellence in Higher Education Agenda, including historic increases in need and merit-based student financial aid. This budget demonstrates the Senate's commitment to investing in Florida's students from Pre-K through college, thus encouraging a competitive workforce for the future, promoting long-term benefits to our economy.



SENATE BILL 2500

State Law Enforcement Pay Increase

5% Pay Raise
for Sworn Law Enforcement Officers

Additionally, the budget makes critical investments in Florida's state workforce with salary increases for state employees. For far too long, the honorable and dedicated state employees who guard prisons, protect our highways, and provide many other critical government services, have gone without an increase in their pay. The most significant investment is in occupations where the state is seeing trouble with employee retention.

Consequently, the Senate's budget significantly increases the starting salary for corrections officers, includes a five percent pay increase for all sworn law enforcement officers, and includes targeted pay increases throughout the judicial branch for judges, assistant public defenders, and our statewide Guardian Ad Litem offices. The Senate budget makes it clear to our state employees that their hard work and contributions to our state are appreciated.

Senate Passes Plan to Significantly Increase Southern Water Storage with Support for Our Agricultural Communities

The Florida Senate passed Senate Bill 10, authorizing a significant increase in southern water storage to further the goal of reducing, and eventually eliminating, harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee.

This bill dramatically expands southern storage by leveraging existing water infrastructure, and utilizing a combination of state, local, and private land, in a manner that respects the interests of the agricultural community and private landowners. This legislation establishes a concrete plan to achieve this critical component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in a reasonable amount of time.

Senate Bill 10 expressly prohibits the use of eminent domain, leveraging land already owned by the State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District, land swaps, and purchases, to minimize impacts on agricultural workers while achieving 240,000 to 360,000 acre feet of storage. The legislation also provides grants to establish training programs for agricultural workers.



SENATE BILL 10

Major Expansion of Southern Water Storage

- ✓ Reduce harmful, polluted discharges from Lake Okeechobee
- ✓ Strategic Water Storage Through a Deep Storage Reservoir
- ✓ Water Quality Treatment Features



SENATE BILL 10

Strategic Water Storage with Support for our Agricultural Communities

- Investments in meaningful economic development and infrastructure
- Provides grants to establish training and employment programs for agricultural workers
- Creates job opportunities in areas of high agricultural unemployment

Nearly half way through the original timeline of CERP, less than 20 percent of the estimated total cost has been funded. It is time to invest in additional projects needed to complete the plan and that is exactly what the voters conveyed in passing Amendment 1.

This legislation provides a clear plan to address the plague of toxic blue-green algae in a manner that benefits communities across South Florida. These algal blooms will continue to occur unless the high volume of discharges from Lake Okeechobee are stopped and pollution in the Lake Okeechobee basin is abated.

Senate Bill 10 will make a significant difference for families, communities, and the economy East and West of the Lake, as well as for southern communities who have waited too long for additional investments in meaningful economic development to expand workforce training and job opportunities.

Senate Passes the College Competitiveness Act

The Senate passed Senate Bill 374, the College Competitiveness Act of 2017, which is a component of the Florida Senate's Excellence in Higher Education agenda, further clarifies the mission of Florida's community colleges.



This legislation will further elevate Florida's nationally-ranked community colleges through a renewed focus on their core mission, which is promoting on-time completion of vital associate degrees and workforce credentials that prepare students for jobs in communities across our state.

The bill reinstates a statewide coordinating board for the Florida Community College System, tightens the community college bachelor degree approval process, expands 2+2 college-to-university partnerships, and clarifies responsibilities within Florida's taxpayer-funded K-20 education system to maximize programmatic offerings and resources already available at state universities, community colleges, and school district technical centers.

Senate Bill 374 was amended this week to include the Senate's Excellence in Higher Education Agenda (Senate Bill 2), which passed the Senate during the first week of the 2017 Legislative Session.

Legislation to Reduce Criminalization of Adolescence

This week, the Senate Committee on Appropriations passed Senate Bill 196, Juvenile Civil Citation and Similar Diversion Programs. The legislation reforms requirements regarding the issuance of civil citations, rather than criminal charges, for certain non-violent youthful offenses.

When young people commit serious, violent crimes, there needs to be an appropriate legal penalty. However, there are many other situations where young people are displaying a lack of judgement and maturity, rather than serious criminal behavior. This legislation ensures that we utilize other avenues that correct inappropriate behavior without stigmatizing our youth with a criminal record that could impact their future education and career opportunities. Senate Bill 196 requires a law enforcement officer to issue a civil citation, or require the juvenile's participation in a diversion program when the juvenile admits to committing certain first-time misdemeanor offenses including: possession of alcoholic beverages, criminal mischief, trespass, and disorderly conduct, among others.

Under this legislation, a law enforcement officer must provide written documentation articulating why an arrest is warranted when he or she has the discretion to issue a civil citation, but instead chooses to arrest the juvenile. Additionally, the bill specifies that the option of the issuance of a civil citation or referral to a similar diversion program, does not apply to juveniles in certain circumstances. Specifically, it would not apply to a juvenile who is alleged to have committed, has plead guilty to, or has been convicted of a felony, or a misdemeanor offense, arising out of an episode in which the juvenile is also alleged to have committed another felony. Over time, the bill may have a positive fiscal impact to state and local governments because an increase in civil citations and similar diversion programs may result in young people being diverted from the Department of Juvenile Justice's more costly residential program. It also may reduce the cost to state and local governments for housing youth in juvenile detention.