

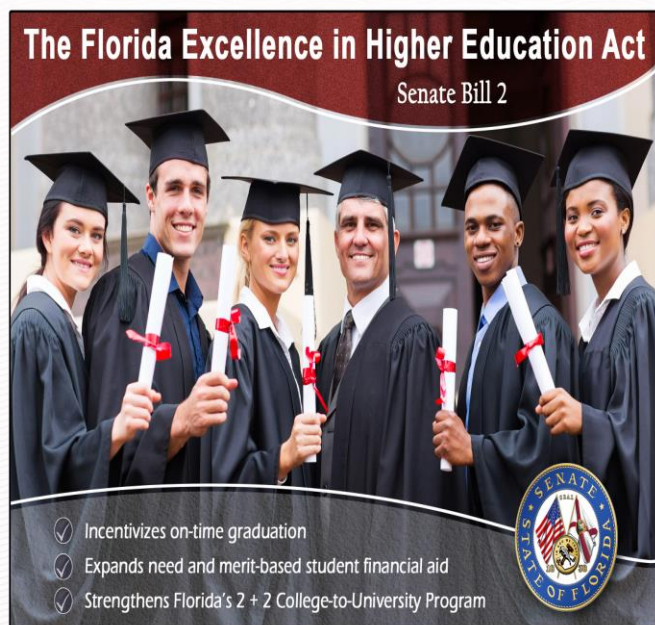
THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE

FEBRUARY 20 - 24, 2017

Excellence in Higher Education Legislation Passes Final Senate Committee

Senate Bill 2, the Excellence in Higher Education Act, and Senate Bill 4, Faculty Recruitment, were merged this week and passed the Senate Committee on Appropriations as a package. Senate Bill 2 is available for consideration on the Senate floor during the first week of the 2017 Legislative Session, which begins on March 7.

The Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act (SB 2), promotes on-time graduation by expanding student financial assistance and support, establishing tuition and fee incentives, streamlining 2+2 articulation, and strengthening mechanisms that keep colleges and universities accountable to Florida taxpayers. It also expands policy and funding tools universities can leverage to recruit and retain the very best faculty, enhance professional and graduate schools, and improve aging infrastructure and research laboratories.



Comprehensive Gaming Legislation Passes Final Senate Committee

Senate Bill 8, Gaming, passed this week in the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the final Senate committee stop for this legislation. This legislation presents a comprehensive approach to regulating a voter-approved industry that has contributed billions of dollars to our economy, while providing thousands of jobs to Floridians over the course of nearly 100 years.

On a statewide basis and locally, voters have communicated that they support gaming in our state. The people of Florida have even authorized gaming in our state constitution. This bill ensures over \$215 million will be accessible in this year's budget for important state priorities like education, infrastructure, and health care. Additionally, this legislation will stop future increases in gaming permits and will remove unused existing permits. It will enhance protection for animals by raising anti-doping standards for racehorses and will ensure any increase in gaming opportunities would only come after the voters of that locality have spoken.

Public School Recess Legislation Passes First Committee Stop

Senate Bill 78, Public School Recess, passed unanimously this week in the Senate Committee on Education. This legislation will add an unstructured free-play recess requirement to district school boards' responsibilities regarding physical education. Specifically, the bill requires each district school board to provide at least 100 minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Such recess must involve at least twenty consecutive minutes of free-play per day.

2017 Legislative Session Right Around the Corner

The Senate will convene in Regular Session on Tuesday, March 7, 2017, at 9:30 a.m. Session begins on the first Tuesday, after the first Monday in the month of March, of each odd-numbered year. For even-numbered years, Session begins on the first Tuesday, after the first Monday in the month of March; or on another date as may be fixed by law. Regular Session may not exceed a period of 60 consecutive days.

Senate committee meetings and floor sittings are streamed live on the Senate's website. The daily video broadcast schedule is available here: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Media/VideoSchedule>.