

**THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
JANUARY 22 - 26, 2018

**Bill Establishing Tax-Free Purchases on Electric Generators Passes Committee**

**Senate Bill 1592: Tax-Free Purchases on Electric Generators**



The Senate Committee on Agriculture passed Senate Bill 1592, Tax-Free Purchases for Electric Generators, sponsored by Senator Denise Grimsley. The bill expands the sales and use tax exemption on generators used on farms, and creates an exemption for generators used in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

During times of disaster, like Hurricane Irma, it is imperative that our nursing homes and assisted living facilities remain safe and fully functioning in the event of a power outage. This bill would assist these facilities with large capital costs for emergency generators by making these purchases tax-free.

Additionally, the bill recognizes that agriculture is one of Florida's main economic drivers, and more must be done to protect the industry from disaster. Under this legislation, electric generators used to supply power to equipment for agriculture production on all farms would also be tax-free.

**Legislation Establishing Tax Exemptions on Items for the Elderly Passes Committee**

Senate Bill 1448, Tax Exemptions for the Elderly, sponsored by Senator Kathleen Passidomo and cosponsored by Senator Doug Broxson, unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs. The bill states that persons age 60 or older will receive a tax exemption on the purchase of items that would assist with living independently in their home.

Items that would be tax-free include bed handles, hospital beds, lifts, handrails, toilet seat risers, and walkers. The bill permits people age 60 or older who live in their own home to qualify for this exemption. Individuals purchasing items for a senior citizen would not qualify for the exemption. Florida's future is linked to the health, financial stability, physical security, and overall well-being of its 5.2 million senior citizens. These tax cuts will give additional cost savings on items that help our senior citizens to continue to live independently with the necessary items and equipment.

### **Legislation Fighting Back Against Florida's Opioid Addiction Crisis Advances**

Senate Bill 8, sponsored by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, and cosponsored by Senators Keith Perry, Kelli Stargel, Aaron Bean, and Kathleen Passidomo, unanimously passed the Senate



Committee on Appropriations. The bill makes a number of changes to Florida law with the goal of preventing people from becoming addicted to opioids, and helping to provide relief to those individuals and families who are already dealing with addiction.

The legislation would establish a three day supply limit when prescribing a Schedule II controlled substance for the treatment of acute pain associated with surgery, trauma, or serious illness. A seven day supply limit may be prescribed if the prescriber believes the dosage is medically necessary to treat the patient's pain or medical condition. Furthermore, the bill increases

the availability of information to guard against multiple prescriptions for the same injury or illness through mandatory participation in the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

The bill also removes insurance barriers to treatment for individuals who are struggling with an opioid use disorder. Currently, in order for a practitioner to prescribe medication-assisted treatment (MAT) drugs, such as methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone, many insurers require a prior authorization request before the insurer will approve the treatment. This change, in conjunction with appropriating more than \$53 million, will allow patients to begin treatment and to receive services immediately.

The updates in this legislation do not affect the long-term treatment plans that patients have established with their physicians to treat chronic pain or terminal illnesses.

### **Legislation Elevating Florida's Nationally Recognized College System Advances**

The Senate Committee on Appropriations passed Senate Bill 540, the "College Competitiveness Act of 2018," sponsored by Senator Dorothy Hukill. This comprehensive legislation further elevates the standing and visibility of Florida's nationally-ranked state colleges through a renewed focus on student success, as well as streamlines the governing structure of Florida's College System to better reinforce its distinct mission.

The College Competitiveness Act supports the over 800,000 full-time and part-time students enrolled in Florida's state colleges by expanding transfer options through new 2+2 targeted

pathways to graduation, and by expanding strategic academic advising to help students save time and money, maximizing the return on their investment.

Additionally, with a mission that is uniquely separate from the role of the K-12 and state university systems, the College Competitiveness Act restores a State Board to oversee the 28 institutions in the system. Currently, state colleges are included within the K-20 system governed by the State Board of Education. Furthermore, the bill requires student and faculty representation to sit on the Board, bringing voices to the table from those directly impacted by decisions being made.