

## THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE

JANUARY 8 - 12, 2018

### Senate Unanimously Passes Permanent Expansion of Bright Futures Scholarship

The Florida Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 4, the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018, sponsored by Senate President-Designate Bill Galvano. Senate Bill 4 expands the state university and student financial aid portions of the higher education agenda advanced last session in the Senate, a top priority of Senate President Joe Negron. The bill includes approximately \$124 million to fund the scholarship programs addressed in the bill for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

This legislation will provide the policy and budget resources our universities need to increase their ability to compete as national destination institutions, while preserving access and increasing affordability for Floridians. From the permanent expansion of Bright Futures Academic and Medallion Scholarships, to codifying key investments in faculty recruitment and improving the quality of our excellent graduate and professional schools, this bill

boosts the strength and competitiveness of our state universities as our primary economic engine to drive vibrant, sustainable economic development and growth in high-paying jobs for not only this generation, but also future generations of Florida students.

Senate Bill 4 earned the unanimous support of the Senate during the first week of Session, and this critical bill now moves to the House for their consideration. The historic increase in need-based student financial aid the Legislature passed last year is already built into our budget. However, without Senate Bill 4, the increase in Bright Futures funding for our Academic Scholars could end after this school year. Additionally, without Senate Bill 4, our Medallion Scholars may not have a chance to see their scholarship increased to cover 75 percent of tuition and fees. These changes had to be made permanent. Senate Bill 4 ensures Bright Futures scholarship funding is available for the students who earned it, so they can better plan their investment in an education at one of our excellent colleges or universities.

As Florida students and families plan for the investment of a college or university education, they deserve financial security and peace of mind. Senate Bill 4 ensures the permanent expansion of Bright Futures so students can count on the full value of the scholarships they worked hard to earn.



### **Senate Passes Legislation Requiring High School Personal Financial Literacy Course**

This week, the Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 88, High School Graduation Requirements, sponsored by Senator Dorothy Hukill and cosponsored by Senators Dennis Baxley, Lizbeth Benacquisto, Travis Hutson, Debbie Mayfield, and Keith Perry. The legislation requires public high school students to earn a half-credit in personal financial literacy in order to meet graduation requirements. The coursework will enable students to enter the next stage of their lives with the skills to manage their financial resources more effectively and help ensure a lifetime of financial security.

The personal financial literacy course instruction will include teaching on important skills such as: opening and managing a bank account, balancing a checkbook, completing a loan application, basic principles of personal insurance policies, computing federal income taxes, simple contracts, and types of savings and investments. Additionally, students will learn basic principles of money management, such as spending, credit, credit scores; and managing debt, including retail and credit card debt. The course requirement would begin for students entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter.

### **Legislation Protecting Minors from Childhood Marriages Advances**

The Senate Committee on Rules unanimously passed Senate Bill 140, Marriage Licenses, sponsored by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto and cosponsored by Majority Leader Wilton Simpson, Senator Travis Hutson, and Senator Keith Perry. The bill makes it illegal to issue a marriage certificate to anyone under the age of 18 in the state of Florida.

Girls as young as 11 years old have been forced to marry adults who have taken advantage of them. Senate Bill 140 repeals the current exceptions that allow for a minor to marry with or without parental consent, when the couple has a child or is expecting a child. This legislation is part of a continuing effort to put laws in place that protect Florida's children.

### **Veteran-Friendly Legislation Advances in the Senate**

The Senate Committee on Appropriations unanimously passed Senate Bill 100, Identification Card and Driver License Fees for Veterans, sponsored by Senator Greg Steube. The bill eliminates the \$1 or \$2 fee a veteran must pay to have the word "Veteran" displayed on an identification card or driver license issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV).

Additionally, Senate Bill 100 prohibits tax collector offices from charging the \$6.25 service fee for driver license services rendered, upon providing the specified documentation proving veteran status. The bill also provides for additional forms of identification a veteran may present to the DHSMV as proof of veteran status.

Florida currently offers numerous benefits that are available to veterans such as fee waivers for veterans and their spouses, and incentives for business entities with majority ownership held by a veteran or a spouse of a veteran. Senate Bill 100 will help solidify Florida's reputation as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.



### **Land Acquisition Trust Fund Legislation Advances in the Senate**

The Senate Committee on Appropriations unanimously passed Senate Bill 370, Land Acquisition Trust Fund, sponsored by Senator Rob Bradley, and cosponsored by Senators Aaron Bean, Debbie Mayfield, and Keith Perry. The bill provides a minimum of \$100 million annually for the Florida Forever Trust Fund. These funds are used to manage and preserve 10 million acres of conservation land in Florida, and provide Floridians and tourists access to public lands for recreational use. Additionally, these funds are used to purchase strategic lands that are crucial to conserving the state's natural beauty and protecting state infrastructure.

### **Legislation Adding Safeguards to Protect Consumers from Telephone Solicitation Advances**

Many Floridians receive unsolicited robocalls from unknown numbers intended to trick consumers into accepting scam sales calls, which are usually illegal. This week, the Senate advanced two key pieces of legislation geared towards increasing safeguards that protect Florida consumers from unwanted telephone solicitations.

The Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism unanimously passed Senate Bill 962, the "Florida Call-Blocking Act", sponsored by Senator Denise Grimsley. The bill permits telecommunication carriers to offer call-blocking software intended to filter out the persistent robocalls that tend to originate from overseas and ignore longstanding restrictions on telephone solicitations. This bill gives state-level authorization for the same call-blocking criteria the Federal Communications Commission approved by rule in November.

The Senate Committee on Rules unanimously passed Senate Bill 568, Telephone Solicitation, sponsored by Senator Dana Young. The bill expands the Florida Do Not Call Act to prohibit the unsolicited ringless delivery of voicemail messages into consumers' voicemail boxes, in addition to phone calls and text messages. The bill also requires a telephone sales call solicitor to provide on the recipient's caller ID, a telephone number that is capable of receiving calls and that can connect the call recipient to the telephone solicitor.

Unwanted phone calls, including robocalls, are consistently among the top consumer complaints filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Currently, the National Do Not Call Program, administered by the FTC, in concert with the FCC under the federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, prohibits telephone solicitors from contacting a consumer who participates in the program, unless the calls meet specific criteria.

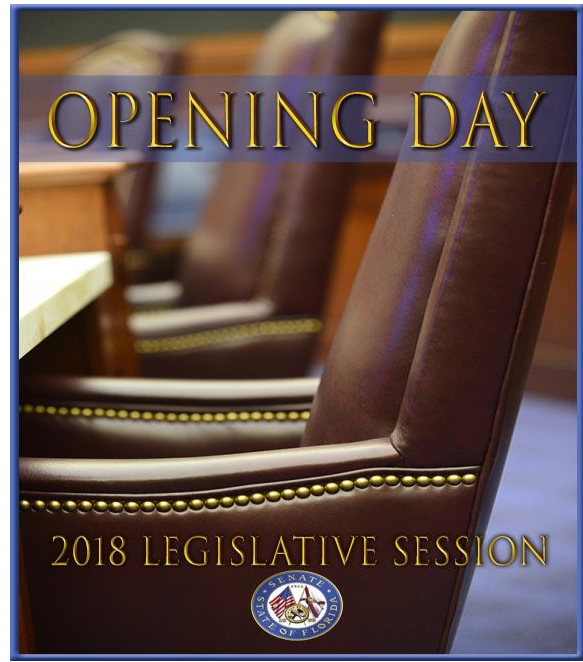
Senate Bill 962 and Senate Bill 568 are consumer-friendly legislation that will further help protect Floridians from scams and unnecessary telephone solicitations.

### Day of the 2018 Legislative Session

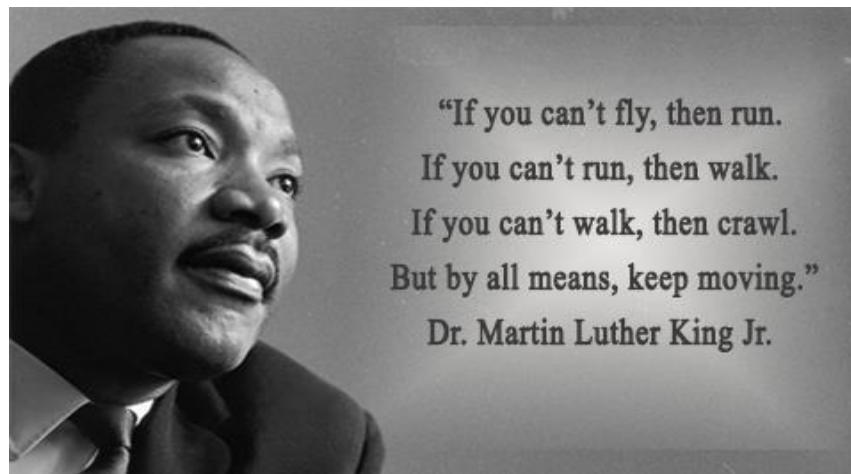
The Senate convened for the 2018 Regular Session on Tuesday, January 9, 2018. During the first day of session, also known as Opening Day, it is customary for the presiding officers to expound on the key priorities their respective Chambers will focus on during the next 60 days.

Senators joined with their families, friends, and constituents on Opening Day to commemorate the official start of the legislative session.

You may view the first day of the Senate Session, which includes remarks by Senate President Joe Negron at the following link: [Opening Day in the Senate](#). Regular Session concludes on day 60, at sine die, on March 9, 2018.



### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day January 15, 2018



Today we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who forever changed our nation. Dr. King was a minister and social activist who played a vital role in the American Civil Rights movement. He was courageous and had an unwavering commitment to speak out in the face of adversity and injustice. During the historic March on Washington in 1963, Dr. King delivered his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech. In 1983, legislation was signed creating a federal holiday on the third Monday in January in observance of Dr. King's birthday. In 1994, the King Holiday and Service Act was passed by Congress, officially designating the Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday as a national day of service. Dr. King once said, 'Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.' All Americans are encouraged to participate in community service projects that bring us closer together and help strengthen our communities. Let us continue to honor the legacy of Dr. King through our commitment to serve and to always strive to do what is right.