

# Senator Paula Dockery 2012 Session Highlights



Dear Neighbors & Friends,

Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you in the Florida Legislature for the past 16 years. The 2012 Legislative Session concluded at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 9, and I wanted to report back to you the highlights of this year's session. I devoted the majority of my time working to defeat potentially harmful and punitive public policy. Fortunately, those efforts were successful.

~ Paula

## Legislation Filed by Senator Dockery

**SB 2016/HB 1299 - Local Bill (Passed—Heading to Governor):** The North Lake County Hospital District, is an existing special government entity with the power to tax local residents. This legislation greatly reforms the powers of the NLCHD and increases taxpayer accountability. The bill limits the district's taxing authority and removes their eminent domain power.

**SB 552 - Ethics Reform:** Would prohibit legislators from voting upon, participating in or attempting to influence the passage of any legislation that would result in their enjoying any special private gain for themselves or their relatives. In the fifth year I've filed this legislation, it was killed by Senate leadership by assigning it to five committees. It was passed unanimously by its first committee, but failed to move forward.

**SJR 1490 - Citizens' Veto:** This bill would provide voters with the right to veto legislation recently passed by the legislature. Florida's citizens would act as an extra check to lawmakers and the governor through a defined process. It failed to be heard in a single committee.

**SB 242 - School Funding:** This bill would have required the legislature to conduct a study to determine the amount of funds necessary to fund the state's public education system, and to determine the average cost per Florida student to meet the funding requirements set forth in the Florida Constitution.

**SB 1664 - School Choice:** This common sense legislation would have clarified state law to allow children whom have completed kindergarten at a Florida private school to transfer into a public school first grade class without having to repeat kindergarten, regardless of age. This would put them on equal footing with students transferring in from other states.

## Bad Bills Defeated

**Prison Privatization:** I helped lead a bipartisan coalition of senators to defeat SB 2038, a reckless and rushed plan to privatize half the state's prisons. Privatization in the right sectors can be an important tool to save taxpayer's money, but this plan was a gift to private corporations, that would have put the public at risk, and caused up to 3,800 experienced corrections officers to lose their jobs, without any proof of actual savings.

**Parent Trigger:** Charter schools can also serve an important purpose, and it is important for parents to hold schools accountable, but SB 1718 provided a potentially fraud-ridden process — allowing for-profit companies to lobby and pay parents in order to take over public schools, including the buildings paid for by taxpayers. This legislation died on the Senate floor in bipartisan vote. The State should identify failing schools and work with school boards to increase their performance with proper tools and resources.

### Committee Assignments

- Commerce & Tourism
- Pre- K—12 Appropriations
- Agriculture
- Children, Families & Elders
- Ethics and Elections

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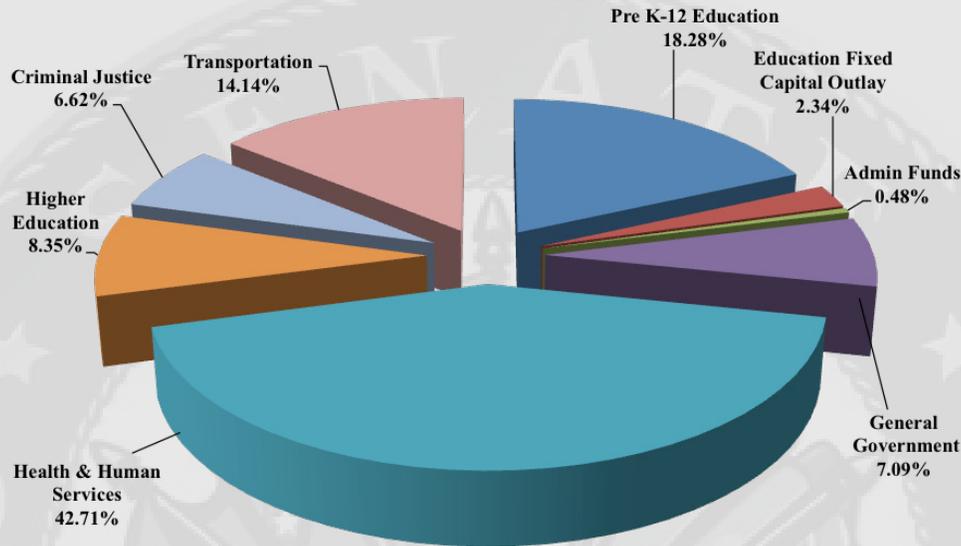
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Matt Harringer

# 2012 - 2013 Budget Report

## Budget Vote 32 - 8

Three Republicans, including me, voted against the \$70-billion budget. The legislature originally had a goal of cutting the state's budget by \$1.5 billion, but we instead increased spending. And while we spent more money, we failed to prioritize our state's education system and vital services for citizens and instead funded corporate handouts, member projects and tax breaks for the wealthy.



### Member-Project Examples

- Florida Holocaust Museum DOE - \$100,000
- Eau Gallie River Project - \$25,000
- Rainbow Springs Restoration Plan - \$60,000
- Loveland Center in Sarasota County - \$500,000
- Adjustment of Haitian Families - \$75,000
- Mobile Health Unit in Gadsden County - \$100,000
- Brevard CC Public Safety Institute - \$2,000,000
- Miami Transportation Projects - \$700,000
- Miami Family Empowerment Nights - \$100,000
- Historic Log Cabin in Biscayne Park - \$150,000
- Study to Expand Rural Economic Activity - \$150,000
- Ragatta Sports Center in Sarasota - \$1,000,000
- Haitian Heritage Museum - \$75,000
- Riviera Beach Freight Carriers Project - \$500,000
- Bay of Pigs Museum - \$500,000
- Hendry County Airport Utility - \$3,500,000
- Apalachicola River Water Plant - \$2,300,000
- Port Orange Flooding Project - \$1,250,000
- LaBelle Waste Treatment Plan - \$2,318,172
- Additional Member Water Projects - \$11,992,163

### USF Polytechnic Update

The state's Board of Governors, in charge of setting higher-education policy, endorsed a plan to responsibly separate USF Polytechnic from the University of South Florida and create the state's 12th independent university. This plan required important benchmarks be met on the way to independence. However, the senate passed SB 1994, filed by Sen. JD Alexander, to unnecessarily speed up the campus divorce. The bill will not only slow down the accreditation process, but will leave Polk County without the USF presence that we have enjoyed for more than 20 years. The new university, Florida Polytechnic would be funded annually at \$22 million, even though they have no students, faculty, programs, accreditation or buildings. The final bill did ensure students currently at USF Polytechnic would be part of a teach-out program, where they will receive degrees from USF, but funding is reduced from \$18 million to \$10 million for the 1,300 students. I opposed this flawed legislation, but it passed on the last day of session.

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