



WEEK 4

MARCH 23-27, 2015

The fourth week of the 2015 Legislative Session began with a dynamic visit by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. My fellow Sorors filled the Florida Capitol with their unmistakable red and white colors for the 21st Annual Delta Days at the Capitol (DDAC). The yearly event gathers Deltas from throughout the state to lobby the legislature on important issues affecting our communities, and I was honored to sponsor Senate Resolution-1602 recognizing Delta Days at the Capitol. After delivering the keynote speech at the Honorable Carrie P. Meek Servant Leadership Social Action Breakfast, I was honored to receive the DDAC Legislator of the Year Award.



Senator Joyner receiving Delta Award (L-R) Dr. Ty'wana Estell, PhD.; Kristal Moore Clemons; Heddie Sumpter and Senator Joyner

2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION MAJOR ISSUES

With five weeks remaining in the Legislative Session, the Senate Appropriations committee began our work on the state budget. Senate Proposed Committee Bill 2500-Appropriations sets the state budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and ending June 30, 2016. The Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously passed its \$80.4 billion plan for the budget year after making minor revisions while the House Appropriations Committee approved its \$76.2 billion proposal without any changes. Once the two proposed spending plans are passed by the respective chambers, the House and Senate will appoint lawmakers to conference committees in order to hammer out the \$4 billion differences before the session ends. A compromise must be reached in order to approve the constitutionally-mandated state budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The major contrast in the House and Senate spending plans is in the health-care area of the budget. The Senate plan include \$2.8 billion of Medicaid expansion money from the Affordable Health Care Act to help lower-income Floridians purchase private insurance. It also includes \$2.2 billion to continue the Low Income Pool (LIP) which helps hospitals pay for low income and uninsured patients. The House on the other hand refuses to budge on expanding healthcare. Thus far, the ongoing stalemate has showed no signs of easing.



Links Day at the Capitol (L-R) Janice Carter-Collier, Senator Joyner and Verneka L. Rhodes

A large divide has also emerged over Amendment 1, which was passed by 75% of voters this past November. Amendment 1 requires 33 percent of documentary stamp revenue be dedicated exclusively to land conservation purposes. But under the Republican Senate budget proposal, just \$2 million would be allotted for land acquisition under Florida Forever, the land buying conservation program begun in 1999 and authorized to spend up to \$300 million annually. Instead, the Senate budget directs Amendment 1 money to pay for such things as restroom and parking lot upgrades, and road construction - expenditures totally unrelated to the voters' mandate. While an amendment I offered to take back almost \$80 million from those projects was unsuccessful, Senate Democrats will resume our efforts to restore Amendment 1 funding as budget talks proceed in the coming weeks.

Committee Assignments

Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice, Vice Chair;
Appropriations; Health Policy; Higher Education; Judiciary; Rules;
Joint Legislative Budget Commission

MY BILLS

Senate Bill 630 - Transfers to Minors would allow a person to make a gift to a minor, which may be held by a custodian, until the minor reaches the age of 25 instead of 21 under current law. My bill passed the Rules committee unanimously and is on the way for a vote by the full Senate.

Awaiting House Passage: Senate Bill 94 - Expanding the "Closing the Gap" grant program to include sickle cell disease, and Senate Bill 132 - easing the requirements for disabled veterans to renew their disabled parking permits, both passed on the Senate Floor, and now await passage in the House of Representatives.

VISITORS TO THE CAPITOL



Senator Joyner and Sally Phillips



(L-R) Bill Johnson, City of Clearwater Councilmember; Brad Miller, PSTA CEO; Senator Joyner; Wengay M. Newton Sr., St. Petersburg Councilman



Senator Joyner receiving the Impact Award from Alpha Kappa Aka Sorority Inc. (L-R) Sylvia Blackmon-Roberts; Sharon Brown-Harriott ; Senator Joyner; Tiffany Moore-Russell; Laurise Thomas

Your Senator,

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