



# THE BERMAN BRIEFING

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SENATE DISTRICT 31



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Whip

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Appropriations  
Subcommittee on  
Agriculture,  
Environment, and  
General Government

Education

Environment and  
Natural Resources

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

December 2019

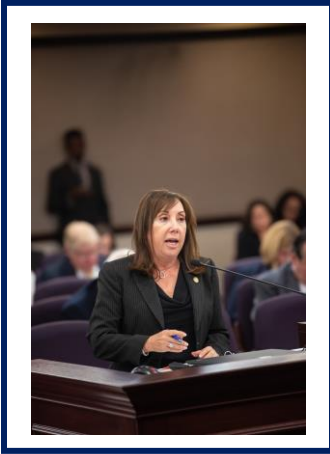
As we enter the holidays, we would be remiss not to count our blessings. Amidst all the political squabbling that occurs in our state and country, know that we are fortunate to live in a democratic society that permits that debate and encourages a diversity of opinions and cultures. We should remember that we are more than a conglomerate of red states and blue states. As President Obama put it, “we are greater than the sum of our individual ambitions... we are, and forever will be, the *United States of America.*”

From December 9th through the 13th, the Florida Legislature will hold its last committee week before the start of the legislative session, set to begin January 14th. Session will last for 60 days, and since its occurring earlier this year, members will be back in their districts by mid-March. This will give us ample time to report our achievements back to you, heed your suggestions, strategize for the next session and continue our journey forward with the hope of creating good, sensible public policy for all Floridians.

## Legislative Updates & Local Happenings

This month, the Senate Committee on Health Policy heard a very controversial bill. Filed by Senator Stargel, SB 404, Parental Consent for Abortion, mandates that young women under the age of 18 receive their parent's consent to receive an abortion in the event of an unintended pregnancy. Current Florida law only requires that they notify their parents. There is a provision in the bill that allows minors to receive a judicial waiver to circumvent parental consent, but the court process for receiving one is convoluted, especially for teenagers. The fact is that Florida's Supreme Court has ruled on this issue and declared that the right to privacy, and therefore, reproductive autonomy, extends to minors. We filed 15 amendments to make the bill better, but they all failed, and the bill is likely to be heard again the next Health Policy meeting.





On November 5th, I presented my bill, CS/SB 358 - Decedents' Property, to the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill amends several sections of the probate code relating to compensation of attorneys who serve as personal representatives, which persons may sue to recover property for the estate, conflicts of interest by personal representatives, and notice in probate proceedings. The bill also amends the trust code regarding compensation of attorneys who serve as trustees. It passed favorably and now resides in the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs.

On November 21st, Representative Joe Casello and I held our Morning Talk where we met with constituents and discussed legislative priorities, bills we've filed, and strengthening school security. I also discussed a bill that our office will be refileing this session -- the "Purple Alert." Formerly, this bill was termed "Orange Alert," but in our on-going coordination with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, we've been informed that the color orange conflicts with other color coding. This bill will create a missing persons alert system, much like Florida's silver alert and amber alert, for cognitively disabled individuals whose disappearance and unsupervised behavior could lead to their immediate danger. Simply put, this bill could save lives.



### Recently Filed Legislation & Funding Requests

- I. **SB 718 - Domestic Violence:** this bill addresses the scourge of domestic homicide happening in our state by prohibiting those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes from purchasing or owning firearms. Every month, an average of 52 women are shot and killed by an intimate partner in the United States. This is simply unacceptable – our measure will disarm domestic abuse.
  
- II. **Palm Beach County Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative:** this initiative is requesting \$3,663,790 in state funds to restore sea grasses, mangroves and oysters, cap muck sediments, construct storm water control projects, and septic-to-sewer conversions in the Lake Worth Lagoon. Revitalizing this important water body provides long-term environmental, recreational and economic benefits to the entire region.

*(For a full list of bills I've sponsored and co-sponsored, please visit [www.flsenate.gov/Senators/S31](http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/S31))*

From all of us in the office of Senate District 31, have a wonderful and joyous holiday season!

*Joni Bennu* \_\_\_\_\_