

Dear Friends,

I hope you all had a great week! My team and I are at the end of the third week of the 60 day Legislative Session in Tallahassee. I have filed 24 bills which are all summarized below. This week I had the honor to meet with many of our local business, nonprofit, and community leaders that were in town and are pictured below!

In Tallahassee this week, three of my bills, Senate Bill 168 regarding Congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV) Screenings, Senate Bill 172 on Veterans Homestead Exemptions, and Senate Bill 234 on Grand Jury Testimony were heard and passed through committees.

My CMV Bill will increase the number of newborns screened for CMV. By detecting infection early, life-long health problems including deafness, can be effectively treated. We also passed legislation off of the floor of the Senate this week, with the most notable summarized below.

Also included in this week's newsletter is information on community events and resources within our area, so please take note!

As always, if you'd like to get in touch with me and my staff directly, please send us an email at Polsky.Tina@flsenate.gov.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina Polsky', is written over a light blue background.

Senator Tina Polsky



Reminder!

Check your voter registration status.

The new law does not change the process for new voter registration applications. However, applications to update an existing voter registration record will now require additional information. If you prefer to vote by mail, please request to have your vote-by-mail ballot requests renewed in order to have a ballot mailed to you.

If you do not renew a vote by mail ballot request, you will not receive a ballot for:

- Upcoming 2024 contests: presidential primaries, later primaries for state and local offices, or the November presidential election.

TO REGISTER TO VOTE, MAKE ANY CHANGES, REQUEST A BALLOT, AND CHECK ON UPCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS:

Broward County: www.browardvotes.gov (click on the vote by mail tab near the top), 954-357-8683.

Palm Beach County: www.votepalmbeach.gov (click on the voters tab at the top, then ways to vote), 561-656-6200.





Ferd & Gladys Alpert
Jewish Family Service
of Palm Beach County



Weekly Support Groups

Providing a safe and non-judgmental space ✓

Discuss and exchange coping strategies and techniques to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges ✓

Facilitate a discussion where participants can share any concerns, questions, or topics ✓

Discuss the importance of setting healthy boundaries between personal and professional life during times of crisis ✓

For questions, please contact 561-684-1991.

Virtual Support Groups

Understanding the depth of pain, loss and trauma that so many of us are experiencing, and the need for a safe space to process together.

Registration required.
Zoom Link will be provided upon registration.

WEDNESDAYS 12:00PM

Support group open to the greater community.

FACILIATED BY:

Alpert JFS Licensed Mental Health Professionals

REGISTER:

<https://tinyurl.com/AJFSCommunitySupport>

FRIDAYS 1:00PM

Support group for employees who work in Jewish organizations.

FACILIATED BY:

Elaine Rotenberg, Ph.D.
Chief Clinical and Impact Officer
and
Iris Kiner, Psy.D.
Behavioral Health Program Director

REGISTER:

<https://tinyurl.com/ProfessionalSupportGroup>



A PROUD PARTNER OF

Jewish Federation
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY



BEEN ARRESTED IN BROWARD?

JOIN OUR FREE SEALING & EXPUNGEMENT WORKSHOP!



Harold F. Pryor
BROWARD COUNTY STATE ATTORNEY



BROWARD STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE Seal or Expunge Your Broward Arrest

Urban League of Broward County
560 NW 27th Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311

Thursday, February 22, 2024
3 pm to 7 pm
Doors close at 7 pm

Adult and Juvenile Walk-ins are welcome!
Government-issued ID is required

Hosted by:

The Broward State Attorney's Office

In partnership with:

**The Broward County Clerk of Courts, Broward Sheriff's Office,
and the Urban League of Broward County**



Westside Gazette

Greenspoon Marder



Urban League of
Broward County



Sheriff Gregory Ton
sheriff.org

PUBLIC HEARING ANNOUNCEMENT

You are invited to a Public Hearing for the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study for Widening Sawgrass Expressway (SR 869) from west of US 441 to Powerline Road in Broward County. There are three participation options to select from:

- Virtually via a computer, tablet, or smartphone on **Tuesday, February 27, 2024**
- By telephone in listen-only mode on **Tuesday, February 27, 2024**
- In-person on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

This Public Hearing is being conducted to give interested people an opportunity to review the study and express their views concerning the location, conceptual design, and social/economic, cultural, and environmental effects of the proposed improvements.

Please visit the project website, www.Sawgrass441toPowerline.com, to register for the Public Hearing and to select your participation option. ****Please note that registration works best in Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or Firefox web browsers.**** The same information will be provided in each participation option. Please contact the Project Manager for assistance in registering.

VIRTUAL OPTION – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024 (6:00 p.m.)

We are using the GoToWebinar platform. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email including instructions on how to join the Public Hearing online. The webinar will open at 6:00 p.m. with introductions and a formal presentation, followed by a formal comment period. If you desire to make a verbal statement, your microphone will be unmuted by the hearing moderator at the appropriate time. For technical assistance during the webinar, please contact TPKMeetingSupport@dot.state.fl.us.

BY TELEPHONE – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024 (6:00 p.m.)

To join the virtual Public Hearing in listen-only mode, please call 562-247-8422 and enter access code 895-169-533. The virtual Public Hearing will begin at 6:00 p.m. with introductions and a formal presentation, followed by a formal comment period. If you select this option, you will be unable to provide a verbal comment during the formal comment period. You can send your written comments directly to the project manager, Jazlyn Heywood, P.E. before or after the Public Hearing.

PROJECT MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION

Jazlyn Heywood, P.E.
 Project Manager
 Consultant to Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
 P.O. Box 613069
 Ocoee, FL 34761
Jazlyn.Heywood@dot.state.fl.us
 (407) 264-3298

IN-PERSON – Wednesday, FEBRUARY 28, 2024 (5:30 p.m.)

Attend in-person at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel located at 11775 Heron Bay Boulevard, Coral Springs, FL 33076. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The hearing will begin at 6:00 p.m. with introductions and a formal presentation, followed by a formal comment period. If you desire to make a verbal statement during the formal comment period, you will be asked to complete a Speaker Request Card. Verbal comments can also be made directly to a Court Reporter.

Project exhibits will be on display, and members of the study team will be available to answer questions. The same informational project video played at the virtual hearing will be shown at the in-person hearing. People wishing to submit written comments/questions may do so at the hearing venue or by contacting the project manager.

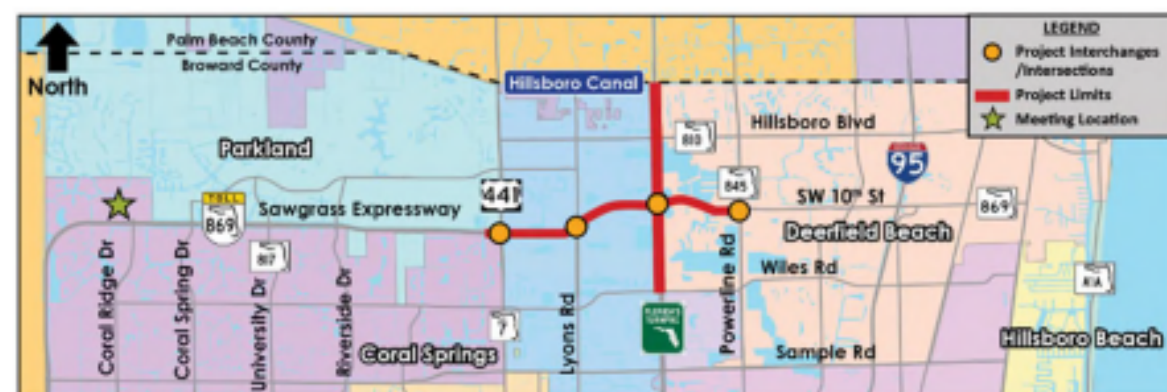
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The proposed improvements include widening of the Sawgrass Expressway and Florida's Turnpike, and improvements to the US 441, Lyons Road, and Florida's Turnpike interchanges with the Sawgrass Expressway. The improvements include direct connections between Florida's Turnpike and the planned SW 10th Street Connector project.

PROJECT DOCUMENTS AND PUBLIC HEARING MATERIALS

Draft project documents are available for review through March 11, 2024, at the Parkland Library, 6620 N. University Dr., Parkland, FL 33067, (M-Th: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; Fri & Sat: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). Draft project documents are also available on the project website, www.Sawgrass441toPowerline.com, and will be available at the in-person Public Hearing. All hearing materials including project display boards, alternatives roll plots, and 3D renderings will be available on the project website the day of the virtual hearing. A recording of the virtual Public Hearing will be posted to the project website following the hearing.

PROJECT LOCATION MAP



★ IN-PERSON PUBLIC HEARING LOCATION

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Please contact the project manager, Jazlyn Heywood, P.E., before or after the Public Hearing with questions or comments about the project. While comments and questions will be accepted at any time, we ask that those in connection with the Public Hearings are submitted by March 11, 2024.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Jazlyn Heywood, P.E. at (407) 264-3298 or by email at Jazlyn.Heywood@dot.state.fl.us at least seven days (7) prior to the Public Hearing. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1(800)955-8771 (TDD) or 1(800)955-8770 (Voice).

ComForcare Home Care Support Group Information

MONTHLY ALZHEIMER'S, DEMENTIA, AND PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUPS

These welcoming groups will provide a wonderful opportunity to:

- Discuss daily challenges in a caring environment
- Develop and practice new skills that make caring for a loved one easier
- Feel less alone and more hopeful about the future

Virtual and in-person support groups hosted by Tino Negri, Nationally Certified

Alzheimer's Educator and Melissa Morante, Parkinson's Care Expert.

For more information and to get details about how to join any of the groups please contact Tino at 631-398-2671 or tnegri@comforcare.com for Alzheimer's and dementia groups or Melissa at 631-766-1495 or mmorante@comforcare.com for Parkinson's groups or [click here](#).

Lunch with Art – The LIVE Music Edition!

Featuring Yendi



Location: Pompano Beach Cultural

When: Feb 15th 12:15-1:15pm

Cost: Free!



Ruth & Norman Bales
Jewish Family Services

Triple P

Positive Parenting Program ZOOM SEMINARS



Seminar Schedule

CLICK ON THE
DATE TO REGISTER
FOR ZOOM
PRESENTATION

Thursday, November 2 | 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Seminar 1 - The Power of Positive Parenting

Friday, December 1 | 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Seminar 2 - Raising Confident, Competent Children

Thursday, January 4 | 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Seminar 3 - Raising Resilient Children

Friday, February 2 | 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Seminar 1 - The Power of Positive Parenting

Thursday, March 7 | 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Seminar 2 - Raising Confident, Competent Children

Thursday, April 5 | 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Seminar 3 - Raising Resilient Children



A certificate will be awarded at
the completion of each seminar.



Triple P – Positive Parenting Program is one of the most effective evidence-based parenting programs in the world, backed up by more than 35 years of ongoing research. Triple P gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children’s behavior and prevent problems developing. Triple P is used in more 30 countries and has been shown to work across cultures, socioeconomic groups and in many different kinds of family structures.

Presented By:

Arielle Blumenthal, LCSW
& Dr. Rachel Sorsher, PsyD



(561) 852-3333 | www.ralesjfs.org

21300 Ruth & Baron Coleman Boulevard, Boca Raton, FL 33428

In Support of Israel and the Jewish Community

Information for Those in Israel:

For U.S. citizens who want to leave Israel:

<https://cacms.state.gov/s/crisis-intake>

Real Time Flights- Ben Gurion Airport in Israel:

<https://www.iaa.gov.il/en/airports/ben-gurion/flight-board/?flightType=departures>

Statement from Secretary Blinken and Prime Minister:

<https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-israeli-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-after-their-meeting-2/>



Organizations Accepting Donations:

Jewish Federation of Boca:

<https://jewishboca.org/israel-at-war-donations/>

American Friends of Magen David Adom Blood Drive:

<https://afmda.org/>

Jewish Federation of PBC:

<https://jewishpb.org/fed/israel-terror-relief-fund/>

One for Israel:

https://www.oneforisrael.org/israelis-relief-2023/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwsp6pBhCfARIsAD3GZuYjpnuFjJloxiRKcQwVoksdLyh3GeUUSViLN-XoqRkZVR8ePJl6pslaAujlEALw_wcB

Great Miami Jewish Federation:

<https://jewishmiami.org/gift/israel-emergency-fund/>

Temple Beth- El

<https://tbeboca.org/>

Disclosure of Grand Jury Testimony

Senate Bill 234

Disclosure of Grand Jury Testimony:

This bill expands the rules that allow for the disclosure of testimony or evidence received by a grand jury. This change will allow for transparency in the Jeffery Epstein Grand Jury testimony records of 2006, where the State Attorney's office decided to have allegations of Epstein's sexual abuse of minors reviewed by a grand jury, which only charged him with one account of soliciting a prostitute. By allowing the grand jury testimonies to become public, it would help reveal why the grand jury returned only one minimal charge and provide the public with increased transparency of their justice system.

[Click here to see the Senator presenting her bill in committee.](#)



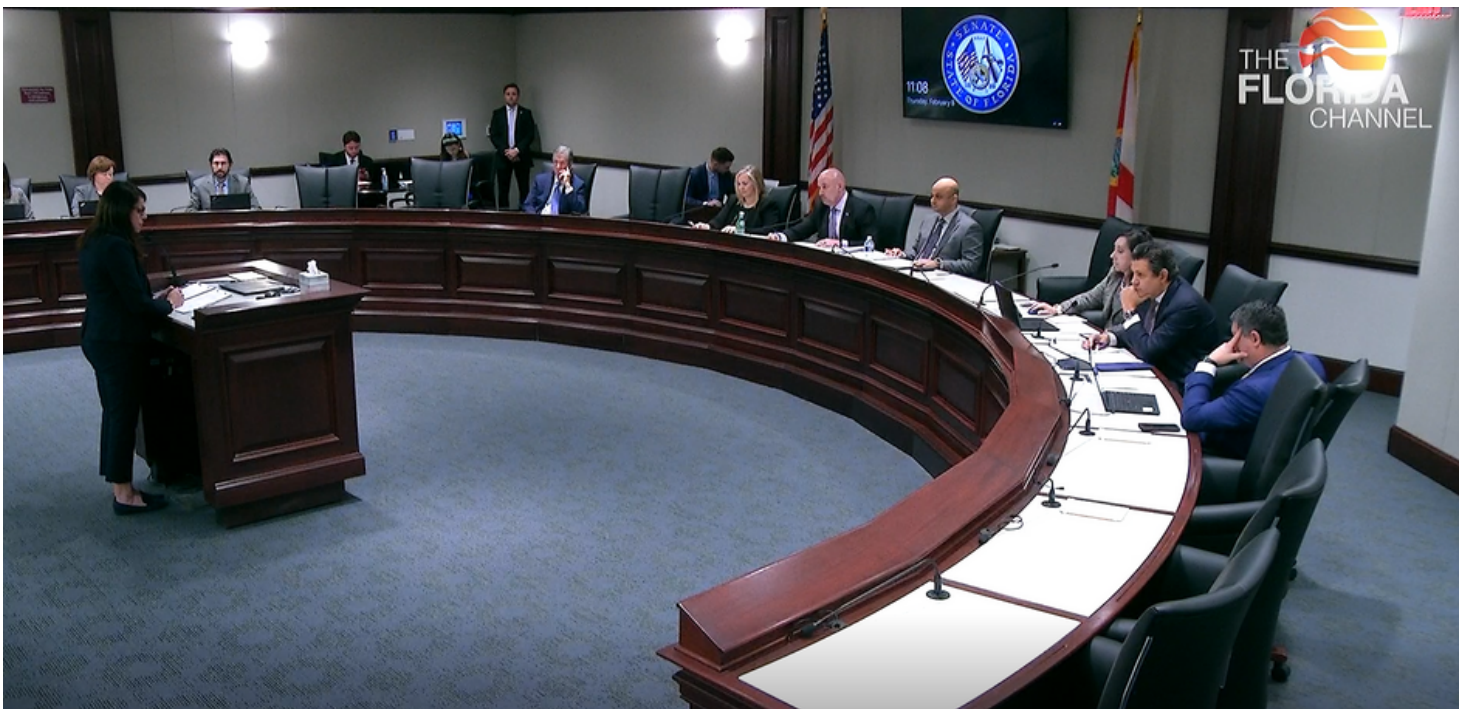
The bill passed unanimously in committee.

Verification of Eligibility for Homestead

Senate Bill 172

Verification of Eligibility for Homestead Exemption:

The bill requires the Department of Revenue to establish a procedure by which a person may verify his or her eligibility to receive an exemption related to the applicant's status as a disabled veteran before the purchase of property. Currently, this is a service which is not required but may be undertaken by local property appraisers at their own discretion. This bill will allow disabled veterans across the state to know their homestead exemption eligibility status easier and quicker than they would otherwise be able to.



Senator Polsky presenting her bill in committee, where it passed unanimously.

Congenital Cytomegalovirus Screenings

Senate Bill 168

Congenital Cytomegalovirus Screenings:

This bill requires hospitals that provide neonatal intensive care services to administer congenital cytomegalovirus (CMV) screenings for newborns admitted to the hospital born before 33 weeks gestation, are small for their gestational age, require cardiac care, or require medical or postsurgical treatment for at least three weeks. The bill also provides coverage under the Medicaid program for the screenings and any medically necessary follow-up reevaluations and treatment.

The CMV virus does not typically cause problems in adults, but babies can contract it from their mothers during pregnancies. In babies, the virus can cause a multitude of problems, most notably hearing loss, but also seizures, vision problems, and other developmental delays.

Senator Polsky in committee preparing to present her bill, with impacted families coming in support



The bill passed unanimously in committee.

Senate Bill 2500 General Appropriations:

Here are some highlights on the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year State Budget:

- The total budget for 2024-2025 is **\$115.9 Billion!**
- Includes a 3% pay raise for all state employees
- The budget includes:
 - **\$933.9** million towards Education Capital Outlay
 - **\$2.4** billion for the Florida College System
 - **\$6.5** billion for the State University System
- **\$649.9** million in water quality improvements
- **\$6.5** million State Mental Health Treatment Facilities

The Senate and the House will next need to compare their passed budgets, and negotiate a single budget to present to the Governor.



Senate Bill 1758: Individuals with Disabilities

This bill is designed to provide more Floridians with easier access with disability resources and includes provisions to:

- Develop community-based care plans that are integrated with education plans for public school students where applicable.
- Improve the ease and effectiveness of the application process, providing printable paper applications and adjusting application review times to match federal standards.
- Expand the number of clients eligible for care in certain situations.
- Coordinate efforts moving forward through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.
- Provides \$16,562,703 in recurring funds from the General Revenue fund and \$22,289,520 in recurring funds from the Operations and Maintenance Trust Fund to the APD in the Home and Community Based Services Waiver category for the 2024-25 Fiscal Year.

Senate Bill 328: Affordable Housing (Live Local 2024)

This bill builds upon the Live Local Act from last session, taking into account feedback from stakeholders in order to balance local government control and the need for more housing within Florida. Some provisions include:

- Modifies or reduces parking requirements for developments.
- Includes clarification and criteria for land use preemption near airports.
- Modifies height preemption provisions where a qualifying development is adjacent to single family parcels.
- Funds the Hometown Hero Program (HHP) at \$100 million using federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars.

In Tallahassee



Senator Polsky's Legislative Aide, Kariana, meeting with leaders from the Pompano and Deerfield Health Rehabilitation Center

Senator Polsky meeting with Broward Boys and Girls Club



Senator Polsky meeting with Jezabel Maisonet, Chief Strategy Officer at the Caridad Center, a Palm Beach County Free Health Clinic

2024 Legislative Session Bills Filed

- **Solutions for Mental Health Professional Shortages (SB 164)** – This bill focuses on trying to attract and maintain mental health professionals in the State of Florida by offering incentives such as establishing a mental health profession scholarship and a loan forgiveness program within the Department of Health.
- **Jaime’s Law (SB 180)** – Named after Jaime Guttenberg, who tragically lost her life in the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in February 2018. Currently in Florida, there are a number of individuals legally prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms AND ammunition. Jaime's Law would close the ammunition loophole by requiring background checks on ammunition purchases. Also filled is SB 182, which provides public records exemptions protections to individuals who undergo a background check stipulated in Jaime’s Law.
- **Safe Gun Storage (SB 176)** – This bill would strengthen efforts to enhance responsible gun ownership. It will ensure that guns remain safely stored when not in use, so they do not end up in the hands of a child. In incidents of gunfire on school grounds, up to 80 percent of shooters under the age of 18 got the gun from their home or the homes of friends or relatives.
- **Legal Representation Contracts (SB 170)** – This bill would require increased transparency and vetting for legal representation contracts. Provisions include requiring the Attorney General to provide a written statement verifying the contract as cost-effective and in the public’s interest, and requiring an annual report be provided to the Legislature on the status of all current legal representation contracts.
- **Same Sex Marriage (SB 160)** – This bill would repeal an out-of-date provision prohibiting the recognition of same sex marriages in Florida.
- **Protection of Parental Rights (SB 1496)** – This bill is related to the protection of parental rights, removing the presumption of child endangerment or neglect based solely upon the parent’s use of medical marijuana.
- **Applicants for President of a State University or Florida College System Institution (SB 990)** – This bill allows University Presidential candidates to remain confidential until the university has narrowed down the selection to its final group of applicants, specifically, this bill requires the final group to contain no fewer than three and no more than five applicants.

2024 Legislative Session Bills Filed

- **Saltwater Intrusion Study (SB 298)** - This bill would allow the 35 coastal counties throughout Florida to conduct a resiliency study. The Department of Environmental Protection would provide grants to conduct assessments analyzing the impacts of saltwater intrusion on county water supply, and the preparedness to respond - including water utility infrastructure, wellfield protection, and freshwater supply management.
- **Weapons and Firearms (SB 518)** - This bill, the "Responsible Gun Ownership Act," would require background checks for the purchase and transfer of firearms, require the sale or transfer of firearms to be done by a licensed dealer, and prohibit licensed dealers from selling firearms without trigger locks or gun cases.
- **Designation of a State Bird (SB 162)** - This bill would recognize the Florida scrub-jay as the official state bird.
- **Verification of Eligibility for Homestead Exemption (SB 172)** - This bill would require the Department of Revenue to establish a procedure by which a person may verify his or her eligibility to receive an exemption or a discount before the purchase of a property.
- **Medicaid Coverage for Prescribed Foods for Disease Treatment and Prevention (SB 488)** - This bill would establish the Food is Medicine Pilot Program to provide Medicaid coverage for purchases and deliveries of prescribed health-promoting foods.
- **Disclosure of Grand Jury Testimony (SB 234)** - This bill would allow for the disclosure of grand jury testimony or evidence, in highly specific circumstances when doing so is of public interest.
- **Florida State Psychiatric Hospital (SB 1246)** - This bill establishes the Florida State Psychiatric Hospital in the city of Chattahoochee and requires enhanced admittance programs for specific kinds of patients, to improve patient experience. This bill can be cited as Florida State Psychiatric Hospital and Enhanced Admittance Programs Act.

2024 Legislative Session Bills Filed

- **Expanded CMV Newborn Screenings (SB 168)** - This bill would require hospitals to expand testing of congenital cytomegalovirus for infants in the NICU. CMV affects one in every 200 babies born each year (approximately 30,000 children annually), making it the most common congenital viral infection in the United States. One in every five children born with congenital CMV will develop permanent health problems like hearing loss (roughly 6,000 children) with as many as 400 infant deaths annually.
- **Resolution of Disputed Property Insurance Claims (SB 178)** - This legislation would require parties to a property insurance claims dispute to participate in mediation, providing that mediation is a condition precedent to commencing litigation. The Department of Financial Services would be required to adopt certain rules and revise conditions under which a policyholder has a certain timeframe to rescind a settlement.
- **Value of Motor Vehicles Exempt from Legal Process (SB 158)** - Increasing the value of a motor vehicle owned by a person which is exempt from legal process.
- **Protections for Public Employees who use Medical Marijuana (SB 166)** - This bill would protect public employees from suffering career setbacks due to a positive test result caused by the legal use of medical marijuana. My staff and I continue to keep a close eye on any other developments in federal law that can move marijuana from a schedule 1 drug classification to a schedule 3 drug classification.
- **Advisory Opinions on Voter Eligibility (SB 904)** - This bill requires the Division of Elections to provide an answer in writing within 90 days of request of a person's eligibility to vote.
- **Firearms (SB 912)** - This bill revises the definition of the term "machine gun" to include weapons that have been modified to mimic the speed of an automatic weapon.
- **Electronic Harassment (SB 920)** - This bill defines the term electronic harassment and establishes the procedures for pursuing civil action in such cases.
- **Bidirectional Charging by Electric Vehicles (SB 1212)** - This bill would investigate the future possibility of having Electric Vehicle batteries to be manufactured with bidirectional charging capabilities. This would mean that EV batteries could not only be charged by an electricity source, but also discharge electricity, for cases of life-threatening emergencies such as power outages and severe weather!
- **Court-ordered Nonbinding Arbitration (SB 1214)** - This bill simply removes the limit on per diem compensation for arbitrators when they are appointed.