

THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE

NOVEMBER 6 - 9, 2017

Senate Advances Legislation to Expand Bright Futures Scholarship

Senate Bill 4:
Ensuring 94,000 Bright Futures



Permanent Expansion of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship

ACADEMIC SCHOLARS - 100% of tuition and fees plus \$300 book stipend for fall and spring semesters

MEDALLION SCHOLARS - 75% of tuition and fees



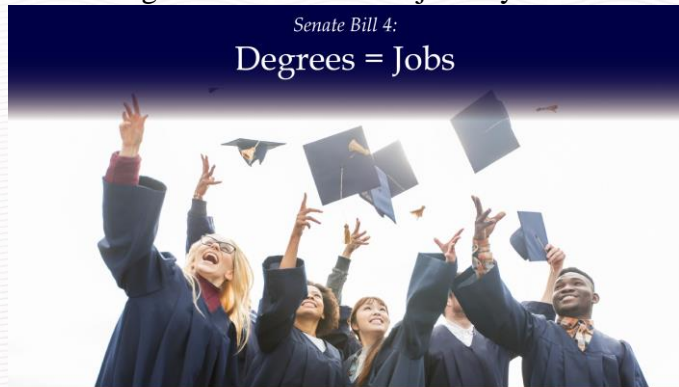
Senate Bill 4, the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018 passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. The legislation expands the state university and student financial aid portions of the higher education agenda advanced last session in the Senate.

Included in the bill are provisions for the permanent expansion of the Bright Futures Academic Scholar award at 100 percent of tuition and fees, and the Bright Futures Medallion Scholar award at 75 percent of tuition and fees.

As Florida students and their families plan for their investment in a college or university education, they deserve financial security and peace of mind throughout their academic journey.


Senate Bill 4 will help alleviate some of the financial burdens facing Florida students and their families. Financial security enables students to put their focus where it should be, on their academic success and graduating on time. A permanent expansion of Bright Futures and flexible tuition policies, combined with continued investments in need-based student financial aid will make on-time graduation much more attainable for students across our state.

Senate Bill 4:
Degrees = Jobs



Investing in Florida's higher education system is an investment in our students and communities

- ③ Students graduate **on-time** with less debt
- ③ Businesses expand, offering **more high-paying jobs**
- ③ Communities see **sustainable economic development**



Florida has some of the brightest students in the nation. Senate Bill 4 sends a strong message that if students work hard to earn the privilege to attend one of our great state colleges or universities, financial insecurities will not stand in the way of their dream of pursuing a higher education.

Land Acquisition Trust Fund Legislation Unanimously Passes First Committee

The Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation unanimously passed Senate Bill 370, Land Acquisition Trust Fund, sponsored by Senator Rob Bradley and cosponsored by Senators Keith Perry and Aaron Bean. 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.

Veterans Care Program Passes Health Policy Committee

The Senate Committee on Health Policy unanimously passed Senate Bill 440, Florida Veterans Care Program, sponsored by Senator Rene Garcia and cosponsored by Senators Aaron Bean, Anitere Flores, Debbie Mayfield, Dana Young, and Wilton Simpson, which addresses specific access and quality of care concerns Florida's veterans continue to face in the federal veterans' health care system. The bill authorizes the state to operate the Florida Veterans Care Program, which would offer veterans and their families an alternative gateway to quality medical coverage.



Through use of the existing infrastructure and operations of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program, or a similar program, veterans and their families would be able to voluntarily enroll and elect coverage quickly through participating managed care plans as an alternative to the federal veterans' health care system. The program is designed to be administratively simple, and would seek to leverage existing managed medical assistance and long-term care operations to reduce costs and expand choices.

In consultation with its partner agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Agency for Health Care Administration will only implement the program after receipt of both federal approval and the necessary federal funding for the project. Making it easier for Florida veterans and their families to access quality health care is another way our state can show our nation's heroes how much their selfless service to our county is appreciated. Senate Bill 440 will help solidify Florida's reputation as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.

Legislation Requiring High School Personal Financial Literacy Course Advances

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Pre-K – 12 Education passed Senate Bill 88, High School Graduation Requirements, sponsored by Senator Dorothy Hukill and cosponsored by Senators Dennis Baxley, Lizbeth Benacquisto, Travis Hutson, Jack Latvala and Debbie Mayfield, requiring 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 9th grade during the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter.

Senate Committees Continue Discussions Related to Hurricane Impacts on the State

Several Senate committees continued discussions regarding the impacts that this year's hurricanes have had on the state of Florida. Listed below are the topics that were discussed.

- Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development held a discussion on potential housing needs and responses due to Hurricane Irma.
- Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government heard a presentation in regards to Florida utility infrastructure.
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services received an update from the Department of Children and Families on the Federal Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) regarding the counties impacted by Hurricane Irma.

Video archives of these and all Senate committee meetings from this week can be viewed online via: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Media/Videos>.

Happy Veterans Day to All Who Have Served



Today we honor America's heroes, the brave men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces. Our veterans have made great sacrifices to keep our country safe and to protect the many freedoms we enjoy.

The dedication, courage, and selflessness from our men and women in uniform has remained constant throughout the history of our Nation. Their contributions towards maintaining our national security is immensely appreciated.

The Florida Senate has worked hard to make sure veterans in Florida receive the respect and appreciation they deserve. We will continue to spearhead public policies that protect and provide assistance to veterans to uphold Florida's tradition of being the 'Welcome Home' state for active duty service personnel, veterans, and their families. Please take time today to thank a veteran for their faithful and honorable service.