



SESSION 2019: POST LEGISLATIVE SESSION

"As a Legislature we passed many things I supported and cosponsored that are good for Florida. Our budget this year includes funding for the environment; and more funds for the Everglades than the governor requested. I am also happy to bring home funds for the District related to health initiatives, educational and workforce initiatives and much needed infrastructure projects. Still, I was deeply disappointed by many important bills that passed this session. I believe that too many of them will do harm to Floridians and I actively opposed them. This newsletter is my attempt to summarize the outcome."

-Senator José Javier Rodríguez

Supporting Public Education and School Safety

School funding formulas are unstable and unfair. They disadvantage many places in our state, but most of all South Florida. Those of us from Miami-Dade have been working for a long time in a bipartisan fashion to fix this. I was happy to cosponsor SB 1284 and work with our delegation on a fix. While a permanent fix did not pass, I am optimistic with the progress we made.

School safety remains a top priority. We ought to do all we can to improve school mental health services, "harden" our schools and improving information-sharing between agencies. Unfortunately, SB 7030, this year's safety bill, included an expansion to a program that arms teachers. I strongly oppose armed classroom teachers as well as diverting school resources to do so. As a result I could not support the bill.

Every neighborhood public school ought to offer a quality education. That goal is not served by SB 7070. That bill diverts \$130 million from our schools for an expansive system of private vouchers. The Florida Supreme Court rejected a similar program a decade ago because it creates a private system that competes with traditional public schools without the same standards. I did not support the bill because I still believe that is the case.

Our teachers deserve raises. For those of us who voted yes on ballot item #362 in November, we voted to give Miami-Dade Public School funds for teachers raises and school safety. There was an effort this year, which I opposed, to retroactively siphon those dollars off to privately-operated schools. Alongside some of my colleagues, we were able to stop such a provision from being included in the Legislature's annual tax bill, SB 7123.

Quality Healthcare

There is a lot our state can and should do to make healthcare affordable and accessible. We also need to protect the most vulnerable. This Session I opposed the governor's nomination of Mary Mayhew to head the Agency Health Care Administration (AHCA). She had a tumultuous record doing the same job in Maine that negatively impacted children's' health and infant mortality.

Defending Homeowners

Condominium residents deserve to have their rights protected. For years the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) has, unfortunately, failed us in enforcing condo laws. Now, however, the agency has a new Secretary. I repeatedly voted against Sec. Bashears' confirmation until he and his team came forward with a plan to change how the DBPR works, including added enforcement personnel, more resources and better systems. As a result, I supported him at the final vote. I am hopeful for change and look forward to working together toward that.



As I have done in the past, I continue to wear rain boots at the Capitol during the legislative session to call attention to the need to #ActOnClimateFL



Thank you members of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in your work for better gun safety laws.



My colleagues and I walked in Miami Beach Pride



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Respecting the Will of the Voters

The 'bundling' of proposed constitutional amendments on the 2018 ballot robbed voters of the chance to meaningfully weigh in on the proposals. I proposed and advanced bills (SBs 74, 84 & 690) to limit amendments to a single-subject each. While these did not pass, there still time next year to correct this issue with our constitutional amendment process.

Voters who properly vote should have their votes counted. Nonsensical or unfair deadlines and complicated rules, such as those that deal with correcting signatures, should not stand in the way. Our elections process in 2018 had many issues that would have been addressed by SB 1386, an election reform bill I filed, joined by two colleagues (Sens. Powell, D- West Palm Beach, and Braynon, D-Miami Gardens). While the bill did not pass, most of its provisions did pass as part of another bill.

Floridians made their choice clear in November when they voted for Amendment 4 to our Constitution. It restored the voting rights of millions of Floridians who have paid their debt to society. Unfortunately, a bill passed, SB 7066, that creates unfair financial obstacles for many returning citizens and I opposed it.

Pushing for Action to Address Climate Change #ActOnClimateFL

Two Senate committees unanimously approved SB 78, a bill I have filed for the second year in a row (HB 169 in the House by Representative Javier Fernandez (D-Miami)). If passed it would require sea level rise planning for taxpayer-funded construction projects in coastal areas. Though the bill did not pass, I am confident about next year. I am encouraged by the broad bipartisan coalition we have built in favor of taking action to address the effects of climate change and sea level rise. As I did last year, I wore rain boots at the Capitol during the entire legislative session to remind my colleagues and visitors that taking action on climate change is urgent and must be a priority.

The Legislature, however, continues to be a difficult place to address the causes of climate change. Moving to renewable energy, like solar and wind, is a part of that. That's why this year, as I have in the past, I filed and fought for legislation to promote renewable energy standards (SBs 1372 & SB 1762).

Supporting Venezuelan Democracy

Following up on legislation I successfully proposed and cosponsored in 2017 (SB 70, SB 538 & HB 359 (2017)), we have continued to advocate in support of democracy in Venezuela and in support of the legitimate government of Guaidó. The Legislature still has not acted in support of measures I have co-sponsored (SM 1660) calling for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for those fleeing.

Protecting Our Community & Small Businesses from Road Construction Nightmares

The nearly three-year road construction project on Flagler and SW 1st was a nightmare for residents and businesses, particularly those least able to cope with excessive road closures and debris. While legislation I filed this year dealing with Flagler did not ultimately pass, SB 112 (HB 61, Duran, D-Miami), I am happy to report progress in working directly with our Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). I hope to soon announce new policies FDOT has agreed to that change the way road construction is done in densely populated urban areas to avoid repeating what happened on Flagler; and on more comprehensive planning policies to look at all uses for the roads (not just cars).

Tackling Discrimination

The Legislature unanimously passed a bill confronting anti-Semitism, SB 1272, that I was happy to cosponsor. Unfortunately, however, SB 84 did not pass. SB 84 is a bill I filed to protect LGBT children from so-called "conversion therapy," a dangerous and discredited practice illegal in 15 states. Though it did not pass, I will continue these efforts.



To discuss joint action on climate change, I had the honor of meeting with Congresswoman Castor, Chair of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis



It was an honor to sponsor the first Venezuela Day in Tallahassee this session.

ASSIGNED COMMITTEES

I currently serve on the Ethics and Elections Committee, Rules Committee, Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government as and Vice Chair of the Judiciary Committee.

LEGISLATION PASSED DURING THE 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING / HB 107

Texting while driving will now be a primary offense, allowing police enforcement to stop a motorist for this offense. Violations result in a noncriminal traffic infraction, punishable as a moving violation and 3 points assessed. Warnings will be issued starting October 1st, with a ban in place January 1, 2020.

WOMEN INMATES / HB 49

The “Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act” passed, requiring state correctional facilities to provide incarcerated women with feminine hygiene and other products and mandating documentation of certain incidents involving male correctional employees.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION / SB 990

A bill passed this year by Rep. Joseph (D-Miami) and Sen. Gibson (D-Jacksonville) that I co-introduced (and sponsored many times in the past) which protects victims of domestic violence with protections at work and from being disqualified of unemployment benefits.

CANCER BENEFITS FOR FIREFIGHTERS / SB 426

Firefighters put themselves at risk for our safety, including exposing themselves to a higher risk of cancer. I was happy to co-sponsor this legislation that passed and will provide cancer benefits to firefighters and their families.

MEDICAL USE OF MARIJUANA / SB 182

Following the letter of a 2016 constitutional amendment, this bill will eliminate a prohibition against the smoking form of medical marijuana and implement safeguards to make sure it is medically necessary.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING / HB 851

Among other things, this bill requires police, hotel employees, and massage parlor workers to receive training to be able to identify signs of human trafficking. I was happy to support it.



SB 168 | SANCTUARY CITIES

Sadly SB 168, a sweeping and divisive anti-immigrant bill, passed this year though I fought against it (including filing a total of 74 amendments to narrow its scope). SB 168 was called the “sanctuary cities” bill but no such “sanctuary cities” exist in Florida. Local and state police already coordinate with federal authorities when it comes to dangerous immigrants. This broadly-worded bill involves local and state government in acting as ICE agents without accounting for other priorities such as protecting witnesses to and victims of crime. In addition to the human cost, this bill will result in large costs to taxpayers as local and state agencies expend scarce resources to do what is normally the federal government’s job.

HB 7103 | COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

This bill undermines affordable housing efforts by making affordable housing laws at the local level, such as in the City of Miami, more difficult to enact and enforce. Given how housing costs continue to go up, we should be doing everything to make it easier to develop affordable housing and not more difficult. I opposed the bill and will continue efforts to support affordable housing.

ABOUT DISTRICT 37

Senator José Javier Rodríguez proudly represents District 37 in the Florida Senate, including:
City of Miami, West Miami, Key Biscayne, Coral Gables, South Miami,
Pinecrest, Palmetto Bay, and Cutler Bay.

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The
RODRIGUEZ
Report



Dear friends and neighbors,

It is an honor to work every day serving the people of District 37. This year’s Legislative Session ended on May 3rd, 2019 and we are excited to bring you the 2019 edition of the Rodriguez Report to keep you up to date on all our efforts in Tallahassee.

Please reach out to my office if I or my staff can assist with anything. The 2020 Legislative Session starts early with committee work beginning in September. It is never too soon to reach out about issues or concerns you have.

It is an honor to serve you and represent our community.

With gratitude,

- Senator José Javier Rodríguez



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