

State Senator Audrey Gibson
District 6
2017 Legislative Session Wrap-Up



Dear Constituent and Friend,

THANK YOU for the opportunity to serve you in the Florida Senate! The 2017 Legislative Session has ended, and the Governor has begun review of legislation that made it successfully through the process.

So often, we hear about the workings of our governmental bodies, but forget that at the state level, new laws and changes go into effect quickly and have significant direct or indirect impact, equally as fast.

In this update, are brief synopses of legislation I thought would be of particular interest to you and your family.

However, if you would like further information on bills, or other legislative matters or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office.



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Action on bills I filed:

I am happy to report the Governor signed my bill **SB 440: Notaries Public**, which passed as **HB 401**. The new law adds a veteran health identification card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to the list of identification a notary may accept to notarize documents.

I am pleased to report that my bill, **SB 1302: Private School Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities**, which passed as **HB 1109**, is on its way to the Governor for signing. The proposed new law aligns the ability for students to participate in interscholastic or intrascholastic activities with new statewide open enrollment policies, which will be implemented beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Private school students, including our children with unique abilities who attend McKay schools, will be positively impacted.

SB 1580: Admission of Children and Adolescents to Mental Health Facilities was added to **HB 1121: Child Welfare**, which is on its way to the Governor. My portion of the bill provides for a facility receiving a child 10 years of age or younger under the Baker Act, to have an evaluation start within 12 hours of a child's arrival. The bill addresses an unfortunate situation that happened in Jacksonville when according to parents, their 6 year old was held for 3 days on a psychiatric ward 'for having a temper-tantrum.' Another important provision of the bill includes creating a task force within the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to include stakeholders from the mental health, education, legal, and law enforcement communities to address concerns regarding the Baker Act of children.

The bill has several other provisions to help our young people namely: allows DCF to use confidential abuse registry information and investigation records for residential group home employment screening, to align this screening with foster home requirements, and permits hospitals and physician offices to release patient records to DCF for investigations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or vulnerable adults.

Other legislation on its way to the Governor:
HJR (House Joint Resolution) 7105: Increased Homestead Property Tax Exemption, proposes to add an additional exemption to the current \$25,000 exemption of taxable value of a homestead. The new additional exemption would apply to homes valued between \$100,000 - \$125,000. I voted against this measure because of the tremendous fiscal impact to all cities and counties, which could negatively impact services in cities across the state. I believe that reduction of a tax that will ultimately lead to the increase of another fee or tax locally, is not a real tax cut. I did offer an amendment to reduce the impact in half by lowering the exemption to \$12,500 but it was not accepted.

Finally, several counties are exempted out of the legislation that are considered "fiscally constrained." While I appreciate these areas of the state are less populated with the potential of severe fiscal impact, for those areas exempted from the ballot measure, to determine the fate of other impacted counties, somehow seems counter democratic.

HB 7069: Education: this controversial education bill contains the substance of other bills that did not have a hearing that enabled free discussion by all members of the senate and the general public. In summary, the bill will undermine public schools and destroy community schools by: requiring local tax revenue for keeping schools in repair, to be shared with charter schools, when such entities are "stand alone" by choice, and have represented they could do so; allowing out of state interests to come into our communities for hundreds of millions of dollars, tax grabs of our state dollars with short term contracts and little to no oversight and accountability to local school boards; stripping federal Title 1 funding from public schools that provide resources in the form of free and reduced breakfast and lunch for our neediest of kids, and giving the dollars to charter schools whether or not they are in a location of need; and leaving out language that would prohibit charter school operators from receiving personal gain. These components and several others fly in the face of logic. The negative outweighing the positive and proved much to be desired for our children, and I ultimately voted "NO!"

SB 370: Florida Wing of the Civil Air Patrol provides employment protection for members of the Florida Wing of the Civil Air Patrol who are absent from their place of employment due to service or training with the Civil Air Patrol. A public or private employer with 15 or more employees, will be required to provide up to 15 days of unpaid Civil Air Patrol leave annually to an employee who is a senior member of the Florida Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, for the purpose of participating in a Civil Air Patrol training or mission. I was happy to support this bill as an added benefit for those helping areas in our state in case of an emergency.

If you have questions on any of the above information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

As always, it is an Honor and a Pleasure to serve you in the Florida Senate!

Sincerely,

Audrey Gibson
State Senator
District 6

Session snapshots:



From Opening Day 2017



To committee work



To the Closing Day of the 2017 Legislative Session I am honored to serve!