



Happy Easter!

I would like to wish you and your family a wonderful Easter Sunday. Today is an opportunity to reflect on our many blessings and celebrate the resurrection of Christ. I am so fortunate to be able to celebrate this holiday with my family and feel incredibly blessed to have the opportunity to represent you in the Florida Senate.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."- John 3:16

Legislation Update

I joined Senator Joe Gruters for a press conference on [SB 168: Federal Immigration Enforcement](#). This bill will ensure that state and local entities and law enforcement agencies cooperate with federal government officials to enforce, and not obstruct, immigration laws. The bill prohibits sanctuary jurisdictions and requires state and local entities to comply with federal immigration laws. A press conference was held this week in the Capitol on this important legislation. You may watch "[4/17/19 Press Conference on HB 527 Sanctuary Cities](#)" on [The Florida Channel](#).

This week I presented the following legislation in **Committee**:

On Monday, I presented [SB 798: Baccalaureate Degree Access](#) to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. This bill allows 4-year state colleges to participate in 4-year sports programs so that they may retain talented student athletes. This bill was considered favorable and will now go to the Appropriations Committee for consideration.

On Thursday, I presented [SB 1278: Biosolids Management](#) to the Appropriations Committee. This legislation requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) adopt rules for biosolids management to include stringent land application rates, and create a real-time water monitoring program to assist in the restoration, preservation and enhancement of our impaired water bodies and coastal resources. This bill prohibits the land application of biosolids at any site that interacts with the seasonal high water table. DEP will also be prohibited from issuing a new permit or renewing a permit for any lands where application is now prohibited. These actions will reduce the migration of nutrients that are polluting our groundwater and surface water quality. The bill was considered favorable and will now go to the Senate Floor for consideration.

On Thursday, I also presented [SB 446: Coastal Management](#) to the Appropriations Committee. The bill revises the criteria used by the DEP to prioritize coastal restoration

projects based on need and importance. Criteria for ranking beach and inlet sand management projects will be refined to better capture the economic importance of healthy beaches to tourism, storm damage reduction and resource protection. This legislation will also increase transparency and accountability from DEP by raising their project reporting requirements. The bill was considered favorable and will now go to the Senate Floor.

On Wednesday [SB 648: Continuing Education for Dentists](#) had its Second Reading on the Senate Floor. This bill requires a licensed dentist to complete a minimum of two hours, as part of their 30 hours of required continuing education requirements, on prescribing controlled substances biennially. The bill will now be placed on the Special Order Calendar for its Third Reading and vote.

This week the following bills passed on the **Senate Floor**:

[SB 178: Florida Tourism Marketing](#) specifies recurring funding and extends the sunset provision for Visit Florida, the tourism marketing division of Enterprise Florida. Under current law, the agency must be reauthorized or it will be dissolved on October 1, 2019. Originally this bill reauthorized Visit Florida with no end date. During the last reading of the bill I proposed an amendment to include a new sunset date for the agency so the legislature will have an opportunity to review their progress at a later date.

[SB 252: Driver License, Identification Card, and Motor Vehicle Registration Applications](#) requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to include an option, on the motor vehicle registration application, to make a voluntary contribution of \$1 or more to the Live Like Bella Childhood Cancer Foundation.

[SB 374: Children and Youth Cabinet](#) adds a representative of the Florida Dental Association to the Children and Youth Cabinet. The Children and Youth Cabinet ensures that Florida's public policy relating to children and youth is developed to improve children's self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health and quality of life. This representative will be appointed by the Governor.

[SB 436: Use of Vessel Registration Fees](#) expands the authorized uses of the county vessel registration fees to include channel and other navigational dredging; the construction, expansion, or maintenance of public boat ramps and other public water access facilities; and associated engineering and permitting costs.

[SB 596: Regional Rural Development Grants](#) provides support for rural economic development and infrastructure projects.

Please follow me on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) for live updates from the Capitol.

From the Desk of Governor Ron DeSantis

Since Governor Ron DeSantis took office just 100 days ago, he has been working to tackle the opioid crisis from every angle. He recently announced that the U.S. Department of Labor has awarded the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity a Dislocated Worker Grant, worth up to \$2,500,000, to combat the opioid epidemic in Florida. This funding will go to **Brevard**, Manatee and Sarasota Counties to address the impacts the opioid crisis has had on our workforce and will provide employment services to eligible individuals who have been affected. Learn more about this grant program on the [Governor's website](#).

Governor Ron DeSantis received [SB 64: Transportation Facility Designations/Officer Lance Christian Whitaker Highway](#) from the Florida Legislature this week. This bill designates the portion of I-295 E Beltway between Alta Drive and Pulaski Road in Duval County as the "Officer Lance Christian Whitaker Highway."

The Governor has until April 24, 2019 to act on this bill. He can sign the bill into law or veto the bill. If no action is taken by April 24th, the bill will become law without his signature. If the Governor chooses to veto a bill, the Legislature can overturn the veto by a two thirds vote of both chambers. [Contact Governor DeSantis's Office](#) if you have any questions or concerns about legislation he has received.

This week Governor DeSantis also signed into law [SB 7016: State-Administered Retirement System](#). This bill establishes the contribution rates paid by employers participating in the Florida Retirement System (FRS). These rates are intended to fund the full normal cost and the amortization of the unfunded actuarial liability of the FRS.

District Highlights

Celebrate Earth Day

On the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, millions of people took to the streets to protest the negative impacts of 150 years of industrial pollution. Congress quickly responded, creating the Environmental Protection Agency and important legislation like the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Earth Day is recognized around the world as a time to celebrate our environment and raise awareness about how to reduce pollution. Below I have listed local Earth Day events in District 17 where you can participate in fun family-friendly activities and learn ways you can help protect our resources and be a good steward of our environment.

[Satellite Beach Coastal Garden Fair & Earth Day Celebration](#)

Saturday, April 27th 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
David R. Schechter Community Center
1089 South Patrick Dr., Satellite Beach

[10th Annual Earth Day Celebration](#)

Saturday, April 27th 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
3500 US-1, Rockledge

[Earth Day & Arbor Day Celebration](#)

Saturday, April 27th 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Riverview Park
US-1 & CR 512, Sebastian

Indian River Lagoon Restoration

As your State Senator, protection of our water resources and the restoration of the Indian River Lagoon is one of my top priorities. Pollutants, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus, are entering our waterways from stormwater runoff, insufficient treatment at wastewater treatment facilities and densely clustered septic systems.

Septic systems are buried tanks that receive wastewater from a home or business, solids sink to the bottom of the tank to form sludge, while lighter layers float to the top. Every time wastewater is added to the system, some of this top liquid is pushed out into the drain field. Septic systems contribute pollutants to surface waters, especially in areas with highly permeable (sandy) soils like the Indian River Lagoon basin. This makes addressing septic tanks an important component in water quality restoration.

The Save Our Indian River Lagoon Plan notes there are almost 82,000 permitted septic systems within Brevard County, of which nearly 59,500 septic systems are polluting the groundwater that migrates to the lagoon.

While I continue to advocate in the Capitol for funding for infrastructure improvements and advanced waste treatment requirements to support the restoration of our treasured waterways, here are a few projects that are currently being implemented on the ground:

The **Cone Road Infrastructure Project** has completed phase one, of three, to ultimately convert approximately 80 commercial and residential properties from septic to sewer. This project will prevent over 2,500 pounds of nitrogen and 822 pounds of phosphorus from entering the Banana and Indian River Lagoon each year. Funding for the project is provided by the St. Johns River Water Management District, Brevard County Natural Resources, Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency and the Save Our Indian River Lagoon program.

The **Breeze Swept Septic Phaseout Project** in Rockledge has been completed. This project converted 139 residential septic tanks to sewer, preventing 4,433 pounds of Nitrogen and 715 pounds of Phosphorus from entering the Indian River Lagoon each year.

Construction has begun on the **Indian River County West Wabasso Project**. This project will convert approximately 54 septic systems to sewer and provide sewer hook ups for 47 vacant parcels. It is estimated that this project will prevent an estimated 3,224 pounds of Nitrogen and 520 pounds of Phosphorus per year from entering the Indian River Lagoon system. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2019.

For more information about these projects and others, please visit the [St. Johns River Water Management District website](#) or see the [Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program Annual Report](#).

Follow me on Facebook and Twitter, and visit my [Senate website](#)



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