

# TALLAHASSEE WEEKLY REPORT

## June 27-July 1, 2011

### Final Bill Action of 2011

Late last week, Governor Rick Scott acted on the final batch of bills passed by the Legislature this year. Two bills of importance to Miami-Dade County were included, one that was signed into law, and one that was vetoed.

Governor Scott signed SB 1676 into law, the University of Miami sovereign immunity bill which was a critical priority for Miami-Dade County. The bill was sponsored by Senator John Thrasher and Representatives Frank Artiles and Jeanette Nunez.

Governor Scott vetoed HB 767, which allows counties to negotiate, rather than competitively bid, leases of up to 5 years and authorizes transfer of right-of-ways between local governments by deed rather than map. The bill was sponsored by Representative Pat Rooney and Senator Gwen Margolis. Attached, please find the Governor's veto letter.

### Senator Don Gaetz Designation

Senator Don Gaetz will be designated as the Republican nominee to serve as Senate President for the 2012-2014 term at a ceremony in September. Senator Gaetz has secured sufficient pledges from his colleagues to take over once current President Mike Haridopolos' term has ended, assuming Republicans maintain control of the Senate, which is likely due to their overwhelming majority.

Senator Gaetz was first elected to the Senate in 2006, previously served as the Superintendent in Okaloosa County. His son Matt currently serves in the Florida House.

### Open Senate Seat

Senator Tony Hill has accepted a position in the administration of incoming Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, and will resign his Senate seat. Senator Hill, who would have been termed out in 2012, will serve as a special assistant and liaison to Tallahassee and Washington. Two former House members, Audrey Gibson and Terry Fields, had filed for Hill's seat when it became vacant next year and have both indicated they will run in a special election.

Representative Mia Jones was also appointed to a position in the Mayor's administration, but will not have to resign her seat.

## **Pension Lawsuit**

A Leon County judge ruled this week that the state can proceed with taking money collected from public employees and depositing it into the state's pension plan. A group of unions, led by the Florida Education Association, had sued the state to block the mandate that public employees contribute 3 percent of their salaries to cover part of their pension costs. While the 3 percent requirement officially begins on Friday, most employees would not see the first deduction until later in July.

The unions wanted the money collected from employees set aside in a separate account while they moved ahead with the lawsuit. The judge stated that there is no reason to order the state to separate the money because she can order monetary damages against the state at a later date if the unions were to win the lawsuit. While the judge agreed that there appeared to be no legal way to take money back out of the state pension plan once it is deposited, she went on to say that "the state of Florida would comply with an order from this court to refund to employees any funds".

A trial date of October 26 has been set.