

# TALLAHASSEE WEEKLY REPORT

April 25-29, 2011

## Session Week 8

The following issues of interest to Miami-Dade County were taken up during the eighth week of the 2011 Legislative Session:

- **Budget:** The Legislature began its budget conference process this week, with issues not agreed upon being bumped to the budget chairs of the respective chambers and, subsequently, to the Senate President and House Speaker. As of printing of this report, there were still several unresolved issues between Senate Budget Chair JD Alexander and House Budget Chair Denise Grimsley, including Medicaid issues. As part of the budget process, the Transportation and Economic Development Conference Committee agreed to \$55.8 million for the Port of Miami Dredging Project. In order for the legislature to Sine Die on Friday as planned, the final conference report must be printed and placed on members' desks by Tuesday to allow for the constitutionally mandated 72 hour "cooling-off" period. Policy issues taken up during the conference process are also delineated below.
- **Pension Reform:** The Budget Conference on FRS/Pension reached an agreement this week which would require public employees to pay 3 percent of the salary to cover pension costs. Public employees who enroll in the pension plan on or after July 1 would see their retirement age go from 62 to 65 for rank-and-file employees and 55 to 60 for special risk employees. Cost of living increases for any service accrued after July 1 are eliminated, but this provision expires and will kick-in again in 2016. The Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) is preserved, but the interest rate is reduced from 6.5 to 1.3 percent for those entering the DROP program after July 1.
- **Growth Management:** The House's growth management plan, which had already passed the full chamber, was included in budget negotiations and added to a budget conforming bill, meaning that, like the General Appropriations Act, it will be voted on without amendments or a policy debate. The House plan removes requirements currently in state law that developers pay for roads, schools and parks, and instead they would become options for cities and counties to require. Senator Jack Latvala voiced his concern over such a major piece of policy legislation being inserted into budget negotiations.
- **Miami-Dade Charter:** SB 1954 by Sen. Garcia, which would amend the Florida Constitution to allow members of the Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation to offer

revisions to the Miami-Dade County's Home Rule Charter by special law to be approved by voters of Miami-Dade County, passed the Senate Rules Committee this week. The bill will be taken up on Special Order in the Senate on Monday, May 2. The House companion, HB 1321 by Rep. Lopez-Cantera, is on the House Second Reading Calendar, but has not yet been placed on the Special Order Calendar.

- **Red Light Cameras:** HB 4087 by Reps. Corcoran and Trujillo, which would repeal the red light camera legislation passed by the Legislature in 2010, was taken up by the House on second reading earlier this week and is now ready for a final vote. The Senate companion, SB 672 by Sen. Garcia, only passed out of one committee, meaning the issue may not be taken up by the Senate once the House sends it to them.
- **Online Travel:** HB 493 by Reps. Brodeur, Patronis, and Abruzzo, which would exempt travel websites from paying a tax on the retail prices offered to customers for hotel rooms, instead the wholesale rate the sits pay the hotels, was taken up by the House on second reading this week, and is now ready for a final vote. The Senate companion, SB 376 by Sen. Gaetz, is currently in the Senate Budget Committee, its final committee of reference, making it possible the Senate can take up the House bill.
- **Property Insurance:** SB 408 by Sen. Richter, a comprehensive property insurance bill designed to make changes to help limits costs for private insurers in an effort to help boost the private insurance market in the state, passed the Senate this week. The bill also puts a three year limit on when a hurricane related claim can be filed, puts new limits on public adjusters and would allow insurers to offer a type of coverage where insurers do not have to pay off a claim all at once. The most controversial provision of the bill was one that allows private insurers to drop sinkhole coverage while maintaining that Citizens would still have to offer it. While there are several other property insurance measures in the pipeline, legislative leaders have maintained that this may be the only one to pass due to the importance of the sinkhole piece. SB 408 is now in messages to the House, where its version of the bill is currently on the second reading calendar.
- **Immigration:** Senate President Mike Haridopolos removed control of his chamber's immigration legislation from Senator Anitere Flores and handed it to Senator JD Alexander, the chamber's budget chairman. SB 2040, the chamber's immigration bill, was removed from the Senate Budget Committee and placed on the Special Order Calendar for Monday, May 2. Rep. Snyder, the House sponsor of his chamber's legislation, said his chamber will not take up their legislation unless something is passed in the Senate.
- **Wage Theft:** The House passed HB 241 by Rep. Goodson this week, which creates the "Florida Wage Protection Law". The bill was amended to exempt Miami-Dade's wage theft ordinance. The Senate companion has only passed one of its three committees.

- **Sale or Lease of a County, District, or Municipal Hospital:** The House passed HB 619 by Rep. Hooper, which would require approval by a circuit court prior to the sale or lease of a hospital. The Senate companion, SB 1448 by Sen. Garcia, is currently in the Senate Budget Committee, but the chamber can take the House companion up via messages.
- **Elections:** The Senate's version of election reform passed the Senate Budget Committee this week, and was placed on the Special Order Calendar for Tuesday, May 3. The bill includes language restricting voters from submitting a change of address or name change on election day, moves next year's presidential primary to August 14, and initiates new standards on minor political parties. The House approved their election package during the previous week of session.

### **Session, Week 9**

Below, please find a list of bills to be taken up during the final week of the legislative session. The chambers will be in session all week, as committees will no longer meet. This list does not include the General Appropriations Act and its implementing and conforming bills, which will likely be taken up on the last day of session. The Senate has its floor calendar posted for Monday and Tuesday, the House only has Monday's posted, as of delivery of this report.

- SB 592, Veteran's Property Tax Discount, Senator Bennett – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 524, Seaports, Senator Latvala – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 768, Seaports, Senator Ring – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 994, Public Records/Public Airports, Senator Latvala – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 1144, Local Government, Senator Margolis – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 1945, Home Rule Charter of Miami-Dade County – Senate Special Order on Monday
- SB 2040, Unauthorized Immigration, Judiciary Committee – Senate Special Order on Monday
- HB 493, Online Travel, Rep. Brodeur – House Third Reading on Monday
- HB 789, Homestead Assessment Limitations/Senior Citizens, Rep. Nunez – House Third Reading on Monday
- HB 4087, Traffic Infraction Detectors, Rep. Corcoran – House Third Reading on Monday
- SB 880, Value Adjustment Boards, Sen. Garcia – Senate Special Order on Tuesday
- SB 1676, Sovereign Immunity, Sen. Thrasher – Senate Special Order on Tuesday (this bill is a county priority, as it relates to U.M. sovereign immunity at Jackson)
- SB 2086, Elections, Subcommittee on Ethics and Elections – Senate Special Order on Tuesday