

# TALLAHASSEE WEEKLY REPORT

## June 15-19, 2009

Below please find a summary of events that took place around the state this past week.

### Update on Legislation

Governor Crist signed the following bills this week that are of interest to Miami-Dade County:

**SB 2108 – Local Option Court Facility Funding** - authorizes counties to impose an additional \$15 fee on traffic and criminal offenses to fund court facilities.

**SB 2666 – CCNA/Architects and Engineers** – increases thresholds regarding architects and engineers for projects from \$1 million to \$2 million and for study activity from \$50,000 to \$200,000.

**HB 611 – Public Construction Contracts** – this bill originally prohibited the use on in-house labor for maintenance and repair, but was later amended to allow maintenance and repair work to be done in-house, except in the case of additions, extensions or upgrades that exceed 20% of the total cost of maintenance and repair. Airports, seaports and transit systems are exempted from these bills.

**SB 1000 – Fire Rescue Sales Surtax** – authorizes counties to impose up to a one cent sales surtax for fire rescue with a commensurate reduction in property taxes. The bill was amended to exclude a county that already imposes two sales surtaxes, which was targeted at Miami-Dade County and our existing Jackson and Transit surtaxes.

**SB 2282 – Accident Response Fees** – prohibits counties and cities from imposing a fee or seeking reimbursement for costs related to certain first-responder services, with an exception for air rescue and hazardous materials.

### Governor Crist signs Gambling Expansion Bill

Earlier this week, Governor Crist signed SB 788, the Legislature's wide-ranging gambling expansion bill. The bill was signed in Miami, and was followed by a visit to Hialeah Park by the Governor.

Hialeah Parks stands to benefit greatly from this legislation, as it will be allowed to offer live horse racing once again, something it hasn't done since 2001. The Park will also be allowed to open a poker room.

This benefit is contingent on the Seminole Tribe and the state coming to terms on a new gambling equipment, an outline for which is included in this legislation. The language allowing Hialeah Park to operate as state above is tucked into this legislation.

The Seminole Tribe has stated if they cannot reach an agreement with the state on a new gambling compact, they will go to the federal government to seek the deal they want. This scenario could cost the state billions in revenue to be used towards education, as the proposed compact calls for the tribe to provide a guaranteed \$150 million minimum annual payment to the state.

## **Hometown Democracy Update**

The Hometown Democracy constitutional amendment cleared a hurdle in its path to appear on the 2010 ballot, as the Florida Supreme Court earlier this week found unconstitutional a law that would have allowed opponents to revoke petition signatures.

The ruling appears to ensure that supporters of Hometown Democracy will have the required 676,811 signatures to put the issue on the ballot. To date, 700,000 signatures have been submitted to the state. The final question now seems to be how quickly elections officials will formally certify the amendment to the ballot.

## **Political Update**

- State Senator Paula Dockery stated earlier this week she will be making an announcement in the future with regards to a possible run for Governor, after spending last weekend meeting with political advisors and consultants.
- Representative Marcelo Llorente has dropped out of the race to replace term-limited State Senator Alex Villalobos in 2010, and has filed to run for Mayor of Miami-Dade County in 2012. This decision now leaves Representatives David Rivera and Anitere Flores as the remaining contenders for the open Senate seat.
- House Speaker Larry Cretul says a decision will be forthcoming as to whether or not he will challenge freshman Congressman Allan Grayson. He says he is strongly considering it, but no decision has been made.

- State Representative Pat Patterson has filed paperwork to run for CFO. He would be challenging Senate President Jeff Atwater in the Republican primary.

## **Florida Association of Counties Conference**

The Florida Association of Counties will be holding its annual conference from June 23-26 in Marco Island. Commissioners Heyman, Sorenson, and Edmonson, as well as OIA, will be attending the conference.