

Top News: Next year's state budget takes shape in House and Senate versions



The Senate Appropriations Committee begins its budget deliberations.

Governor Rick Scott released his 2018-2019 proposed [Securing Florida's Future Budget](#) last November, calling for \$87.4 billion in spending and \$180 million in tax cuts. The Governor's proposal becomes the starting point for legislative budget negotiations. While state budget discussions have been ongoing for several months, they picked up steam this week as House and Senate budget subcommittees rolled out recommendations. These subcommittee recommendations will be amended and rolled into single, comprehensive budget proposals by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees next Wednesday, January 31. Then the budget conference process will begin, so the House and Senate can iron out the differences between their two budget bills and adjourn sine die on time.

The initial House and Senate budget proposals include additional funding for Community Care for the Elderly and Home Care for the Elderly; no funding for United Way's \$1.2 million to assist 31,000 ALICE families secure more than \$45 million in federal income tax returns; and a sweep of about \$12 million (under 5%) from the affordable housing trust funds, far less than in recent years.

Education: Key early learning policy bill gets a first hearing in the House



Rep. Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach) presents HB 1191: Early Learning, addressing both quality and accountability

Florida's School Readiness (SR) program provides children at greatest risk of school failure with early learning opportunities that prepare them for kindergarten and early grade success. As the legislature works to improve third grade reading outcomes for students, they have begun to recognize the benefit of quality early learning programs as well as the need for accountability. More than a dozen bills have been filed this session that address both of these issues. [CS/HB 1091: Early Learning](#), sponsored by Rep. Erin Grall, (R-Vero Beach), is a critical policy bill. A key provision requires the Office of Early Learning to adopt program accountability measures, including a SR provider program assessment of teacher-child interactions. The intent of this assessment is to begin to weed out the lowest performing providers and to establish a baseline for improvement and performance-based reimbursement. An appropriation of \$5.9 million federal trust fund dollars will pay for these baseline assessments. The companion bill, [SB 1254](#) (Passidomo, R-Naples) will be heard next week in the Education Committee. [Read more.](#)

Health: CHIP reauthorized; KidCare bills would streamline Florida's program



Sen. Daphne Campbell (D-Miami), left, and Rep. Nick Duran (D-Miami) sponsors of the KidCare bills

This week, Congress passed a budget bill that included a 6-year [reauthorization](#) of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). KidCare, the Florida CHIP, currently provides affordable health insurance for almost 200,000 children. Many more eligible children are not enrolled in the program. According to the [Georgetown University Health Policy Institute](#), Florida was one of 10 states in danger of running out of KidCare funds, putting children at risk of losing their health coverage. With the federal funding now assured, Florida can begin to look at streamlining KidCare to make it easier for parents to their enroll children and to keep them in the program. [CS/HB 293](#) (Duran, D-Miami) and [CS/SB 108](#) (Campbell, D-Miami) create a workgroup to study how KidCare program administration could be improved. The bill has passed all its Senate committees of reference and has one remaining committee stop in the House.

Income: Florida Senior Day gift: Tax Exemption for Seniors bill passes committee



(Left) UWOV President & CEO Ted Granger speaks on the steps of the Old Capitol for Florida Senior Day; (Right) Florida Children's Week: the annual "Hanging of the Hands" in the Capitol Rotunda

Festivities at the Capitol abounded during Week 3 of the Legislative Session as Florida Children's Week and Florida Senior Day brought more than 5,000 advocates, seniors, children, teachers and more to the Capitol. Florida's United Ways legislative priorities include both children's and older adults' issues. Home and community-based care helps seniors stay independent and remain in their homes for as long as possible, saving taxpayer dollars and, more importantly, allowing seniors to age with dignity and in the comfort of their own homes. On Monday, the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

Committee passed **SB 1448** (Passidomo, R-Naples) to provide an exemption from Florida's six percent sales tax for persons age 60 or older when they purchase certain items (e.g., beds, furniture risers, stair lifts, shower seats, handrails, walkers, etc.) that would assist them to live independently in their homes. The bill has two more committees of reference; the House companion bill **HB 1123** (Berman, D-Boynton Beach) has not yet been heard in committee.

Bills to Watch



Week of January 29 - February 2, 2018

CS/HB 21 Controlled Substances (Health Quality Subcommittee) - Requires practitioners to complete continuing education course to prescribe controlled substances; defines "acute pain"; provides for adoption of standards of practice for treatment of acute pain; limits prescribing of opioids for acute pain in certain circumstances; requires pain management clinic owners to register approved exemptions with DOR; provides requirements for pharmacists & practitioners for dispensing of controlled substances to persons not known to them; conforms state controlled substances schedule to federal controlled substances schedule; revises requirements for prescription drug monitoring program. Last action: Bill to be discussed during EDR Criminal Impact Conference, 01/29/18. No votes will be taken.

HB 683 Dentistry (Perez, R-Miami) - Defines "dental therapist"; authorizes dental therapists to perform certain remediable tasks under specified supervision; provides requirements for licensure as dental therapist. Last action: On Committee agenda - Health Quality Subcommittee, 01/29/18

SB 1254 Early Learning (Passidomo, R-Naples) - Requires each early learning coalition's school readiness program plan to include a specified assessment; requires a school readiness program provider to participate in specified assessments and strategies. Last action: On Committee agenda - Education, 01/29/18

SB 1388 Preapprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs (Garcia, R-Hialeah) - Creates the Earn and Learn Grant Program within the Department of Education; establishes the Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion within the Department of Economic Opportunity. Last action: On Committee agenda - Education, 01/29/18

SB 1442 Early Childhood Court Program (Book, D-Plantation) - Requires the Office of the State Courts Administrator to verify the existence of an Early Childhood Court program at certain circuit courts; requires the Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy to hire a statewide clinical consultant and assemble a clinical oversight team; requires the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to conduct an evaluation of the program's impact in consultation with the Department of Children and Families and other entities. Last action: On Committee agenda - Children, Families, and Elder Affairs, 01/29/18

SB 1532 Early Learning Coalitions (Stargel, R-Lakeland) - Authorizes an early learning coalition to refuse to contract with certain school readiness program providers. Last action: On Committee agenda - Education, 01/29/18

SJR 1742 Supermajority Vote Required to Increase State Tax Revenues by Increasing Taxes (Stargel, R-Lakeland) - Proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to require a law that imposes a new tax, increases the rate or amount of a tax, or expands a tax base, and that results in a net increase in state revenues, to be approved by three-fifths of the membership of each house of the Legislature. Last action: On Committee agenda - Appropriations Subcommittee on Finance and Tax, 01/29/18

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Questions or Comments?

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