

Top News: Proposed Budgets Teed Up for Passage by House & Senate



Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Rob Bradley (R-Orange Park) right, and Senate President pro Tempore Antone Flores (R-Miami) have a light moment during consideration of the proposed state budget.

The fourth week of session was highlighted by passage of the proposed 2018-2019 state budget by the full Appropriations Committees in both chambers. The proposed Senate budget ([SB 2500](#)) is \$87.3 billion and the House plan ([APC 18-01](#)) is \$87.2 billion.

While the \$100 billion difference between the bills is relatively small in state budgeting terms, the differences in their priorities are huge. One example: The Senate increases funding for state universities by \$400 million while the House cuts them by "only" about half of that. Other major priority conflicts abound.

The full House and Senate will consider their respective budget bills next week, setting the stage for conference committees to then hammer out the differences between the two bills.

Education: Early Learning Bills Keep on Rolling

Years of working to pass legislation that would lay the groundwork for establishing quality thresholds in early learning programs and using them to more adequately pay providers may finally pay off this session. [CS/SB 1254](#) (Passidomo, R-Naples) unanimously sailed through the Senate Education Committee on Monday and its companion bill, [CS/HB 1091](#) (Grall, R-Vero Beach), awaits hearing in the PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee.



Senator Passidomo (R-Naples), sponsor of key early learning legislation.

Both bills require the Office of Early Learning to implement a program assessment for school readiness that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions, and then provides for a 10% differential payment for high performing providers based on that assessment. This will encourage providers to maintain quality programs while at the same time weeding out bad providers.

Public Assistance: Tough Love or a Helping Hand?



Representative Dane Eagle (R-Cape Coral) left, and Senator Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg) have offered opposing solutions to improving compliance with public assistance work requirements.

Florida's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) Program provides cash assistance to needy families with children. Recipients must meet work requirements and lose their benefits if they don't comply.

[CS/CS/HB 751](#) (Eagle, R-Cape Coral) passed the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee on Tuesday. It would merely increase the penalties for noncompliance, increasing loss of benefits ranging from 10 days to one month for the first noncompliance and 12 months for the fourth.

On the other hand, [SB 508](#) (Rouson, D-St. Petersburg) passed unanimously out of the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee on Monday. It requires development of a plan to address potential noncompliance challenges facing recipients and requires recipients to confirm in writing that they understand their responsibilities and the penalties they face for noncompliance.

Health: 250 Families Could Lose Healthy Families Services



The Senate Appropriations Committee considers its proposed 2018-2019 state budget.

Healthy Families Florida is a nationally-accredited, voluntary family support and coaching program that helps parents provide safe and stable environments their children need for healthy growth and development. It has achieved extraordinary results with, among many others, 98% of families it serves being free of maltreatment three years after completing the program, and 85% of participants improving their self-sufficiency by gaining employment, enrolling in job training, furthering education or securing stable housing.

While the next year's proposed House budget maintains funding for the program, the Senate proposal cuts \$865,713 in Healthy Families funding. This will result in 250 families and their 425 children losing access to critical and potentially life-saving child abuse prevention services.

Bills to Watch





Week of February 5 - 9, 2018

SB 1520 Licensure of Child Care Programs (Hutson, R-Palm Coast) - Requires certain organizations offering child care through after-school programs to be licensed as child care facilities

SB 1562 Elder Abuse (Passidomo, R-Naples) - Creating a cause of action for an injunction for protection against the exploitation of a vulnerable adult; providing a list of persons who may seek an injunction; requiring that a clerk of the circuit court assist the petitioner in preparing an affidavit or direct the petitioner to a certain office, under certain circumstances, etc.

SB 260 Students with Disabilities in Public Schools (Book, D-Plantation) - Amending provisions relating to the seclusion and restraint of students with disabilities; revising school district policies and procedures relating to restraint and seclusion; requiring continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with emotional or behavioral disabilities, etc.

CS/SB 1254 Early Learning (Passidomo, R-Naples) - Early Learning; Revising the duties of the Office of Early Learning; providing that failing to meet certain measures for a specified period is cause for termination of a provider; revising the required contents of the school readiness program plan each early learning coalition must submit; revising the priority criteria for participation in the school readiness program; revising school readiness provider requirements for program participation, etc.

HB 6021 Guardian Ad Litem Direct-Support Organization (Stevenson, R-St Augustine) - Abrogates future repeal of provisions related to guardian ad litem direct-support organization.

SB 392 Juvenile Justice (Bracy, D-Ocoee) - Increasing the age of a child at which a state attorney may, or is required to, request a court to transfer the child to adult court for criminal prosecution; increasing the age of a child at which a state attorney may, or is required to, file an information against the child for prosecution as an adult, etc.

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Questions or Comments?

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