



### **Session is Almost Here**

With less than two weeks before session begins on March 5, our Senators will enter their final week of committee meetings on Monday. Since the November elections, Senators have been busy meeting with their various committees to begin the process of preparing a balanced budget for the state and considering legislation on issues ranging from Ethics reform, Pension Disclosure to tax relief.

This week a number of joint committees and appropriations subcommittees, as well as the Senate Select Committee on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, will continue to work on policies geared to benefitting our great state.

Moving forward, our Republican Caucus will continue to work hard to prepare legislation that will create jobs, foster economic growth and promote freedom for all Floridians.

### **Working to Establish Better Safety Practices in Florida's Schools**



Florida's children, teachers and support personnel could be more prepared during potentially dangerous situations in Florida's schools under a bill that was filed this week by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). Senate Bill 790, known as School Emergency Procedures, requires that schools have at least as many emergency lockdown

drills as they have emergency evacuation drills per year.

"The goal is to enact straight forward solutions that can be implemented now to increase safety for our students" said Senator Brandes.

Through the bill, our law enforcement agencies and fire officials will be encouraged to participate in at least one of the lockdown drills and to recommend school safety improvements in order to keep our children safe. Additionally, the proposal requires that the schools submit an electronic after-action report after each emergency lockdown drill to the school district to better establish best practices and identify safety concerns.

"Ensuring that our students have a safe learning environment is one of the highest priorities of the legislature," said Senator Brandes. "As a military officer I used after-action reports as an invaluable tool to improve my unit's performance. It is my expectation that this tool will also improve the safety procedures at our educational institutions."

### **Senate Appropriations Subcommittees Continue to Push Toward Session**



During this past week's committee meetings, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittees continued their intensive review of government agencies' base budgets in order to prepare for the drafting of the 2013-2014 General Appropriations Act. The goal of the review is to provide all Senators, new and returning, with a complete understanding of what is included in the base budget so that each Senator can be equipped with the information necessary to make decisions on what priorities should be funded moving forward. Next week will conclude the Senate's Intensive Budget Review before the 2013 Legislative Session begins on March 5.

Additionally on Tuesday, the Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development unanimously passed a bill that facilitates improvement to Florida's economy and continued decreases to our unemployment rate. Sponsored by Senator Nancy Detert (R- Venice), SB 224 establishes several provisions related to the Florida Small Business Development Center Network which links state economic development efforts with those of higher education.

The Appropriations Subcommittee on Education reviewed the implementation of university incentive funding required by House Bill 7135, which passed through the Legislature in 2012. Among other things, the bill created a pilot project to establish performance funding (\$15 million) for certain computer science and information technology degree programs offered by universities.

### **Schedule**

Committee Week: February 2013 - Week of the 18<sup>th</sup>  
 Session Begins: March 5<sup>th</sup> 2013