

# FLORIDA SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

SENATOR BILL GALVANO, MAJORITY LEADER



This Week in the Florida Senate

January 25-29, 2016

## Senate Bill 1638, Postsecondary Education for Veterans

On Monday, the Senate Committee on Higher Education approved Senate Bill 1638, Postsecondary Education for Veterans, to increase access to postsecondary education and certification opportunities for Florida's military men and women. SB 1638 expands tuition and fee waiver eligibility for Purple Heart recipients and recipients of superior combat decorations. The bill ensures service members receive academic college credit at public postsecondary education institutions for college level training and education acquired in the military. These initiatives guarantee members of the United States military have every opportunity to achieve their academic and career goals in Florida and is an expression of gratitude for the many sacrifices our military men and women have endured in serving our country.

## Senate Bill 676, Access to Health Care Services

### SB 676: Expands Availability of Quality Medical Care



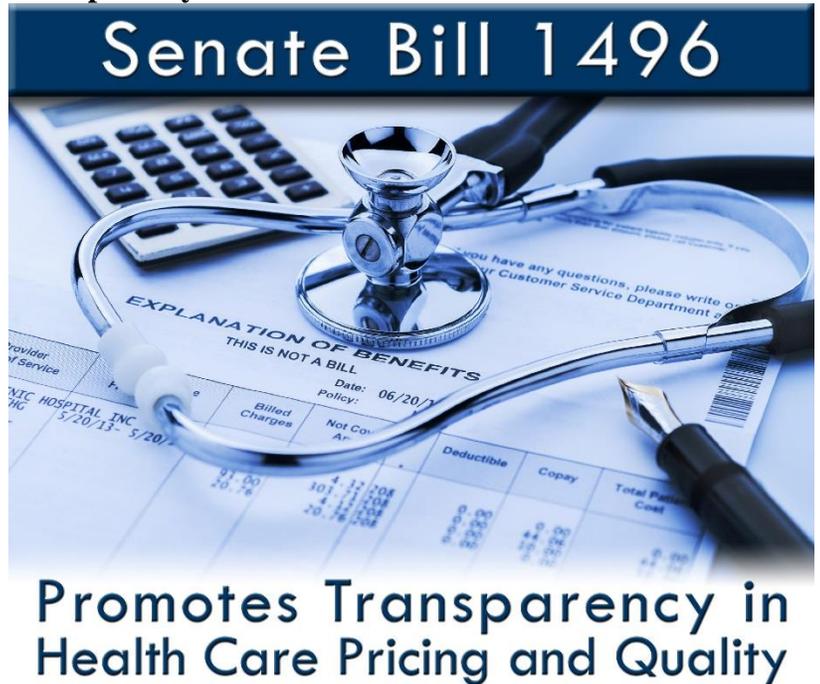
Allows Practitioners with Advanced Medical Training to Better Meet the Needs of Patients

The Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance approved Senate Bill 676, Access to Health Care Services, to expand prescribing privileges for physician assistants (PAs) and advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs). This bill will assist many rural communities across our state where physicians are simply not available and patients with serious medical conditions have to travel great distances to receive care. Florida is currently the only state that does not allow ARNPs to prescribe controlled substances and is one of two states that does not allow PAs to prescribe these medications.

After completing years of education of clinical training, PAs and ARNPs have the skills needed to prescribe these medications to the patients they serve. This legislation will help make medical care more readily available while maintaining the high standards of training required to prescribe these controlled substances. SB 676 authorizes PAs and ARNPs to prescribe controlled substances under current supervisory standards for PAs and protocols for ARNPs beginning January 1, 2017, and creates additional statutory parameters for their controlled substance prescribing. The bill requires PAs and ARNPs to complete biennial continuing education on the safe and effective prescribing of controlled substances.

### **Senate Bill 1496, Transparency in Health Care**

Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services approved Senate Bill 1496, Transparency in Health Care, to increase information to consumers on health care pricing and quality. SB 1496 empowers patients with reliable information to assist them in making health care decisions and will strengthen consumer advocacy. The legislation provides the general public and consumers with up front estimates of health care services and procedures by a common named service bundle to easily compare the health care services that are provided in hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers. The bill also directs the Agency for Health Care Administration to contract with a vendor to create a consumer friendly, internet based platform for searching data about health care costs for specific service bundles.



### **Senate Bill 1722, Termination of Pregnancies**

This week, the Senate Committee on Health Policy approved Senate Bill 1722, Termination of Pregnancies, to increase state oversight of abortion facilities. Florida is taking the appropriate steps to make sure fetal remains are disposed of properly so that we can prevent the troubling allegations surrounding the sale of these body parts that came to light this summer from happening in our state. The bill ensures clinics and practitioners who perform these procedures are held to the same medical standards as other facilities where similar outpatient procedures are performed. SB 1722 adds protections for women by ensuring practitioners have the proper protocols in place to provide medical care should complications occur following an abortion. First trimester abortion clinics, must have a transfer agreement or admitting privileges with a local hospital and second trimester clinics must have both so that all physicians who perform abortions can provide the appropriate medical treatment if needed.

The legislation extends the current prohibition against the sale and donation of fetal remains from an abortion by specifying limits on any disposal of fetal remains and increases penalties for improper disposal. SB 1722 also restricts state agencies, local governmental entities, and Medicaid managed care plans from contracting with, or expending funds for the benefit of, an organization which owns, operates, or is affiliated with facilities that perform abortions. Under the bill, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) would collect certain data from facilities in which abortions are performed and are required to perform annual licensure inspections of abortion clinics and promptly investigate all credible allegations of unlicensed abortions being performed.

### **Senate Bill 12, Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

To improve the delivery of mental health and substance abuse services in Florida, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services unanimously passed Senate Bill 12, Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Florida's current system of behavioral health services is fragmented and inefficient, making it hard for

persons with complex and persistent illnesses to obtain the services they need. SB 12 re-assesses our current method of providing and funding mental health services through a more pro-active, comprehensive approach to treatment. This bill responds to the comments shared by providers, law enforcement, judges and other concerned Floridians over the last several years. The bill will help people suffering from mental illness and substance abuse disorders by improving coordination among service providers, increasing access to appropriate care, and reducing repeat hospitalizations.

SB 12 clarifies the use of involuntary outpatient services to encourage courts to use outpatient services when appropriate and available rather than more costly inpatient care at the state's treatment facilities. The bill defines the "No Wrong Door" model of behavioral health services as a way of optimizing patients' access to care regardless of their point of entry into the behavioral health system. SB 12 updates the duties and responsibilities of the behavioral health managing entities to better serve local communities by coordinating care among a full array of behavior health services. In addition, the legislation directs the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create performance measures and standards to be used in contracts with managing entities and directs DCF, in coordination with the managing entities, to develop a plan to obtain federal approval for increasing availability of federal funding for behavioral health care.