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Legislative Session Week Five
Friday February 18, 2016

**The Sachs
Sentinel**



Week Five: Policy Developments

We have now passed the half-way mark for the 2016 Legislative Session, but there is still much more to come. See what we have been up to at the Capitol!

ZIKA VIRUS ALERT



Photo of an Aedes aegyptus mosquito, a species found in Florida that can carry the Zika virus

A menacing new virus now stands to rapidly spread throughout our state and has already been documented in Broward County. The Zika virus induces mild symptoms like rash and fever, and is mainly spread through bites from infected Aedes aegyptus mosquitoes. However, pregnant women who catch the virus are at serious risk of their unborn children developing microcephaly, a serious birth defect characterized by an abnormally small head and brain. Governor Rick Scott has already declared a state of emergency in at least seven Florida counties in preparation for a likely outbreak, and all pregnant women arriving from regions with Zika virus activity should get themselves checked immediately. To help keep the Zika virus from spreading, please make sure to apply bug spray and eliminate sources of standing water in and around your property. You can also contact the Zika Virus Information Hotline at (855) 622-6735.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

THE HONORABLE CONSUL GENERAL OF ITALY GLORIA BELLELLI COMES TO THE SENATE



L to R: Mary Jane Tappen, Executive Vice Chancellor K-12 Public Schools (Florida Department of Education), Gloria Bellelli, Consul General of Italy, Hershel Lyons, Chancellor of the Division of Public Schools (Florida Department of Education) and Senator Sachs



L to R: Frank Collins, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Executive Office of the Governor, Gloria Bellelli, Consul General of Italy, Senator Sachs, and Collin Lomagistro, Legislative Analyst for the Executive Office of the Governor



Senator Sachs introducing Consul General

Bellelli on the Senate floor during session

Last week, I was honored to host the Consul General of Italy, the Honorable Gloria Bellelli. Her visit to Tallahassee underscored Florida's deep ties to global languages and trade.

During her visit, Consul General Bellelli and I first conferred with Frank Collins and Collin Lomagistro of the Executive Office of the Governor, where we discussed methods for expanding trade between Florida and Italy. Florida's total merchandise trade with Italy in 2015 totaled more than \$3 billion in value, with the biggest imports to Florida consisting of motor vehicles, yachts and other vessels for pleasure. Our meeting successfully yielded promising results for an even greater future system of commerce between our two regions.

The Consul General then met with Hershel Lyons and Mary Jane Tappen from the Florida Department of Education. Thanks to the passage of a bill opening Florida's schools to the teaching of the Italian language to elementary school students, plans were discussed to increase participation from Italy for bringing more language and culture to our schools.

THE DANGERS OF FRACKING

Oil and gas companies are honing in on Florida as a region for "fracking." This is an extreme form of drilling for oil and gas in which a toxic cocktail of water, sand and

chemicals are injected into the ground at incredible pressures to fracture shale rock and release fossil fuels. Evidence has shown that fracking can contaminate water supplies, increase the likelihood of cancer and babies with low birth weights in nearby populations, and result in infrastructural costs in terms of road damage and job losses in other economic sectors. Many scientific experts are now even pointing to fracking as a potential cause of increased earthquake activity in areas where such drilling is taking place. SB 318 and HB 191 not only call for expanding fracking in Florida, but also for prohibiting local governments from instituting fracking bans. For the sake of the health, safety and well-being of both Florida's residents and the environment, I am strongly opposed to fracking in Florida.

HELPING FLORIDA'S GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANTS



Senator Sachs with graduate student assistants who came to show their support for SB 1230

"Graduate assistants are the backbone of the university system. They work alongside faculty members to create knowledge in their disciplines and share that knowledge with our undergraduate students. It has been increasingly difficult for our graduate students to continue their work because of increasing fees within the university system." My bill waives certain fees charged to graduate students in our university system. Over 100 individuals were present last week in committee to support these measures. I am happy to report that the bill passed unanimously.

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED INCOME INEQUALITY



Did you know why the salary schedules set for supervisors of elections are \$7,000 lower than that of other constitutional officers in the State of Florida? It is generally accepted that the reason for this lower salary level is because women were traditionally in those positions. "It is time to create parity between the salaries of supervisors of elections and other elected officials of the same class such as county clerks, tax collectors and property appraisers." Senate Bill 514, a bill that I am strongly supporting, passed committee last week and will remedy this historic bias by providing equality in income within this context.

OTHER VISITORS TO OUR STATE CAPITOL

Manufacturers Association of Florida



L to R: Manufacturers Association of Florida Executive Director Nancy Stephens & Senator Sachs

"Manufacturing in Florida is a vital industrial asset to our state's economy." Florida's advanced manufacturing industries are diverse and include sectors producing intermediate and finished products ranging from plastics to motor vehicles. In fact, Florida is home to over 18,200 manufacturers employing more than 317,000 workers. "We must continue to look for ways to preserve and improve the climate for business manufacturers in Florida through working with groups like the Manufacturers Association of Florida."

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech



Senator Sachs with advocates from Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech, including her littlest visitor of the week

As of 2011, there were an estimated three million Floridians who were deaf or hard of hearing. It is therefore important for our state to provide children who are deaf or hard of hearing with the listening, learning and spoken language skills they need to succeed in life. Accordingly, Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech representatives and I discussed ways to impact the lives of children and adults with hearing and speech impediments through educational and early childhood programs, hearing services, mainstream services, research and curriculum development. "Sometimes the best advocates for appropriations are the smallest, and so was my visitor this week."

Florida State Oriental Medical Association



L to R: Ella Feldman, Ronald Osceola, Dickie Walls, Senator Sachs, Danielle Kravitz, Leonle Wims and Wilfred McLain

The State of Florida is home to a wide variety of alternative healthcare practitioners, including those who practice acupuncture and oriental medicine. In this context, there have been numerous instances of wounded combat veterans and other individuals with mental and physical trauma benefiting more from holistic approaches like acupuncture than from traditional drug-based treatments. For this reason, it is important for our state to collaborate with groups like the Florida State Oriental Medical Association in promoting alternative medical professions through clinical excellence and practitioner support.



"Stay tuned every week, we will be sending you updates as we work for good policy for all Floridians"

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