



Senator Wilton Simpson

Weekly Update

January 14th - 17th 2013

Friends,

This week the Florida Senate met for the first Committee Week of the new year. The Republican Caucus has an ambitious set of goals for the upcoming session that will help create jobs, foster economic growth and promote freedom.

On November 2, 1983 in ceremony at the White House Rose Garden, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill creating a federal holiday to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Dr. King believed in the importance of equality, moral character and family. I hold these principles close to my hearts and will look to them as I go into the 2013 Session. I hope you have a wonderful Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.

Remember, if you have any issues with a state agency, or want to share your opinion of potential legislation with me, please contact my staff, or email me directly at simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov.

Regards,

Wilton

Ethics and Elections Hears Supervisors of Elections Testimonies & Workshops First Ethics Bill

The Ethics and Elections Committee met twice this week with a renewed focus on improving both Florida's voting system and the ethical standards that govern our local officials. On Monday, ten of Florida's elections supervisors provided testimony about their experiences during the 2012 General Election, including Pasco County Supervisor Brian Corley, and I met with him on Thursday morning to talk about this issue further.

During the committee, the Supervisors discussed the good and bad of Election Day 2012 while explaining the challenges they faced dealing with polling sites, early voting sites and ballot tabulating. They outlined a range of issues including logistical issues with early voting sites, voting tabulation equipment malfunctions, the large volume of absentee ballots and the length of the ballot. Generally, all of the Supervisors agreed that additional flexibility in selecting early voting sites would help reduce long lines.

The Committee also met on Tuesday to discuss ethics reform. After hearing a presentation given by the Ethics Commission on its legislative priorities for 2013, the committee work-shopped a number of concepts designed to promote public confidence in Florida's elected officials. These concepts will be drafted into a proposal to be heard by the committee next Tuesday. The issues covered likely include giving the Ethics Commission the ability to initiate investigations without complaint under certain circumstances, banning gifts from CCEs, garnish wages for unpaid fines and regulating the voting prohibition standards.

Intensive Budget Review

This week the Senate Budget subcommittees continued their intensive budget review 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. I serve on the Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee and the General Government Appropriations Subcommittee.

This week committees examined budget allocations for many government agencies including the Department of Corrections, Department of State and Public Service Commission. Budget subcommittees began their review the week of Dec. 3, 2012 and will continue during the Committee Weeks of January 14, January 21, February 4, February 11 and February 18.