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2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION NEWSLETTER

Dear Friend, with the 2019 Legislative session ending on May, 4th 2019, I am happy to share with you all the exciting things my office was able to accomplish!

I entered this session ready to fight for the core principles that you elected me to represent on your behalf. I filed bills focused on public safety, education, equal rights for women and the LGBTQ communities, enacting smart gun legislation, and protecting our state’s natural environment.

LEGISLATION FILED

I was able to successfully pass Motor Vehicle Racing, Senate Bill 116, through both chambers, and the House version of my bill was subsequently signed into law by the governor.

This bill allows law enforcement to investigate and curb street racing, an issue that has afflicted Central Florida for years.

There were several other bills I filed this session that were unable to make it all the way to the Governor’s desk.

- Sexual Battery Prosecution Time Limitation (SB 130) Removing the Statute of Limitation on reporting sexual abuse of minors.
- Child Care Facilities (SB 94) Requiring daycares to install an alarm in vehicles transporting children to make sure no one is left behind.
- Florida Forever (SB 944) which would require \$100 million dollars to be reoccurring in the state budget in the Florida Forever Land Acquisition Trust Fund for the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands.
- Anti-Fracking bill (SB146) Advanced well stimulation treatment, this bill would have made all types of the hydraulic fracturing process illegal.

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WORKING ACROSS THE AISLE

The process of Co-Sponsorship allows me to endorse and present another Senator's legislation. Some major bills that I Co-Sponsored this session include:



- Insurance Assignment Agreements (SB 122), Assignment of Benefits bill that would keep insurance premiums down.
- Medical use of Marijuana (SB 182) legalizes smoking marijuana for medicinal purposes.
- Hazing (SB 1080) expands the definition of hazing to include when a person solicits others to commit or is actively involved in the planning of hazing.
- Infectious Disease Elimination Programs (SB 366) A bill allowing for county commissions to authorize and create needle and syringe exchange programs.
- Public Records/Victim of Mass Violence (SB 186) expands the exemption from public records to include a photograph or a video or audio recording which depicts or records the killing of a victim of mass violence.
- Use of wireless communications devices while driving (SB 76) Texting while driving. This bill would make using a mobile cellular device while operating a motor vehicle illegal.
- Firefighters (SB 426) creates certain benefits to firefighters diagnosed with cancer.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments are a way to enhance or change the content of a bill. I was able to introduce multiple amendments that improved on the original versions of legislation.

- Public Safety (SB 642), I was able to attach an amendment that would allow HIV Positive individuals to be tissue and organ donors to others with HIV. While the Senate supported this language, the House was unable to amend it into the bill.
- There was a Deregulation bill (SB 1640) I attached an amendment that would include Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) to be included on the Florida Building commission. Orange County has one of the largest BOMA chapters in the state.
- With the help of Senator Tom Lee, I amended the Transportation Package (SB 7068). My amendment included environmental groups to be added to each corridor task force with the FDOT on potential new toll roads and multiuse corridors outside of Orange County. Final reports will be submitted to the Governor and Legislature. While I do not support the development of new toll roads, I wanted to make sure the environmental community had a voice in the process.

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BUDGET

The Legislature's single largest responsibility is passing a budget that outlines the priorities for our state and tackles the challenges we face. I'm proud to report that we were able to deliver on the issues that matter to our community.

The legislature agreed to a \$91.1 billion dollar budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020

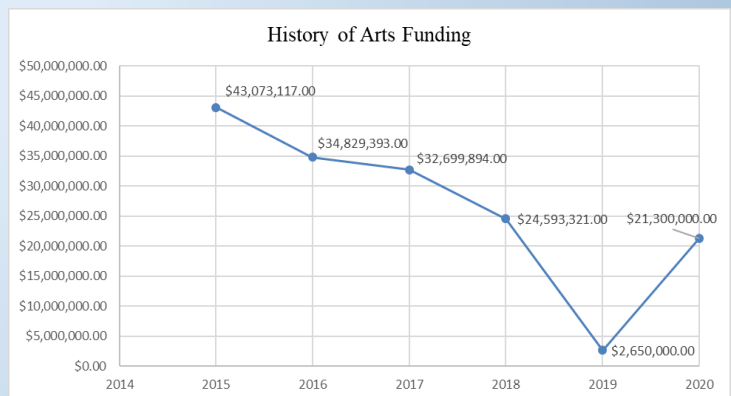
Through appropriations requests I was able to secure funding in the final budget for projects throughout my district.

- While at first the House did not agree to fund the construction of a permanent memorial at the site of Pulse, the Senate was able to secure \$500,000 in the budget for construction.
- I was able to secure \$80,000 in the budget for Project Lifeboat, an organization dedicated to assisting victims of human trafficking.

Throughout session, I worked hard to help increase funding to Florida Forever, which now has \$33 million dollars in the budget.

There remains money in the budget from the previous fiscal year that will carry over to total \$99 million for Florida Forever.

I also advocated for the increase in Cultural Arts Grants, increasing the amount of monies allocated last year to Arts from \$2.65 million to \$21.3 million in 2019. This increase was supported at the highest level by the Senate President.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Amendment 4 – Voter Rights Restoration for former felons. Through ballot initiative Floridians voted to restore voting rights to individuals who had served out their felony sentences. Election Administration (SB 7066) requires that all restitution be paid by former felons before having their right to vote restored. I did not support this bill.

Sadoski Funding – The trust fund for affordable housing in Florida remained partially untouched this year, allowing for the continued funding of affordable housing programs throughout the state. Part of the trust fund was used to provide housing relief for communities affected by Hurricane Michael.

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SESSION HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

School Choice and Exams— The legislature heavily debated school choice this session. More funds were allocated to funding voucher programs that allow students to attend a public school alternative of their choice. I voted opposing this bill. The legislature also passed legislation that adjusted the eligibility scores for Bright Futures to align with the new SAT and ACT examination scores.

Hurricane Michael—In early October of 2018, Hurricane Michael struck the Panhandle, devastating communities and vastly altering the landscape. This natural disaster played a large role in changing much of the legislative and budgetary priorities of the 2019 session, it was necessary to lend a hand to our fellow Floridians to help them rebuild their communities.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020

My office is already working hard on organizing my priorities for the upcoming 2020 session. I will be refiling bills not passed this session, and continue my fight to preserve Florida's natural environment, advocate for equal pay and rights for women and the LGBTQ communities, and make our communities safer with common sense legislation on guns. I will be working to acquire funding for Mental Health, Human Trafficking, Arts, Educational, and Juvenile Justice needs.

On Monday, August 19th, 2019 the Orange County Legislative Delegation will have its annual meeting. For more information please visit: www.ocfl.net/legislativedelegation

