



## THIS WEEK IN THE FLORIDA SENATE

DECEMBER 4 - 8, 2017

### Permanent Expansion of Bright Futures Scholarship Heads to Senate Floor

Senate Bill 4, the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018, passed the Senate Committee on Appropriations. The legislation is sponsored by Senator Bill Galvano and cosponsored by Senators Keith Perry, Dana Young, Rob Bradley, Kelli Stargel, Greg Steube, Kathleen Passidomo, Aaron Bean, Dennis Baxley, Dorothy Hukill, Lizbeth Benacquisto, and Majority Leader Wilton Simpson.



Having passed three committees of reference, the legislation will be available for consideration on the Senate Floor when the 2018 Legislative Session convenes in early January.

Senate Bill 4 expands the state university and student financial aid portions of the

higher education agenda advanced last session in the Senate. Included in the bill are provisions for the permanent expansion of the Bright Futures Academic Scholar award at 100 percent of tuition and fees, and the Bright Futures Medallion Scholar award at 75 percent of tuition and fees.

This legislation has been worked on for the last two years, and significant feedback from students has been taken into consideration. It is clear from the feedback received that the availability of summer funding for Bright Futures plays a key role in the ability of our students to graduate on-time.

This week, Senate Bill 4 was amended to appropriate approximately \$131 million to fund the scholarship programs for the upcoming fiscal year. Additionally, the bill now includes summer Bright Futures funding for Medallion Scholars, beginning in 2019.

As Florida students and families plan for the investment of a college or university education, they deserve financial security and peace of mind. Senate Bill 4 ensures the permanent expansion of Bright Futures so students can count on the full value of the scholarships they worked hard to earn.

### **Land Acquisition Trust Fund Legislation Advances in the Senate**

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Environment and Natural Resources unanimously passed Senate Bill 370, Land Acquisition Trust Fund, sponsored by Senator Rob Bradley, and cosponsored by Senators Keith Perry and Aaron Bean. The bill provides a minimum of \$100 million annually for the Florida Forever Trust Fund. These funds are used to manage and preserve 10 million acres of conservation land in Florida, and provide Floridians and tourists access to public lands for recreational use. Additionally, these funds are used to purchase strategic lands that are crucial to conserving the state's natural beauty and protecting state infrastructure.

### **Legislation Waiving Certain College Fees for Active Military Members Passes Committee**

Senate Bill 460, Postsecondary Fee Waivers, sponsored by Senator George Gainer and cosponsored by Senator Doug Broxson, unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security. The bill would authorize a Florida College System institution to waive any portion of specified fees for active duty members of the Armed Forces who use military tuition assistance.

The specified fees that may be waived include any portion of the student activity and service fee, the financial aid fee, the technology fee, and the capital improvement fee. Senate Bill 460 supports Florida's active military service members who are pursuing a higher education by implementing cost saving measures to help them achieve their postsecondary goals.

### **Legislation Establishing Florida's Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday Passes First Committee**

The Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism unanimously passed Senate Bill 686, sponsored by Senator Keith Perry. This bill creates a 10-day "Back-to-School" sales tax holiday beginning July 27, 2018, and ending on August 5, 2018.

During the sales tax holiday, specific "back-to-school" items are exempt from the state sales tax and county discretionary sales surtaxes. Specified items that will be tax-free include clothing, footwear, and backpacks that cost \$100 or less; school supplies that cost \$15 or less per item; and personal computers and related accessories that cost \$1,000 or less.

### **Governor's 2018-2019 Budget Recommendations Heard in Senate Committees**

Several Senate Appropriations Subcommittees heard presentations regarding the Governor's Fiscal Year 2018-2019 budget recommendations for the various state agencies, departments, and entities. The following subcommittees heard presentations this week.

- Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Environment and Natural Resources
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Pre-K - 12 Education
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
- Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education

Video archives of these and all Senate committee meetings from this week can be viewed online via: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Media/Videos>.

**Happy Chanukah!**  
**Tuesday, December 12 – Wednesday, December 20**



As families gather to celebrate during Chanukah, let us all take the time to reflect upon our many blessings, and on the things which are truly important. During the next eight days, may the good that is within continue to shine bright as each candle is lit on the Menorah. May the Festival of Lights be filled with good health, peace, hope, and love. From my family to yours, warm wishes for a wonderful holiday season. Happy Chanukah!