



Senator Wilton Simpson

Weekly Update

Senate District 18

April 8th – April 12th, 2013

Friends,

Throughout Session, there are many groups, associations, and organizations that visit the Capitol to inform the legislative body about their specific interests, and issues. There are many organizations that give the opportunity for constituents, professionals, and children to interact with lawmakers and to get a glimpse of how the state's legislative process works. I had the pleasure last week of meeting with children during children's week in Tallahassee, and took time on Tuesday morning to read to children in the children's corner in the Capitol Square.



It is always great to meet with constituents, organizations and business owners in Tallahassee from Senate District 18, and last week I was happy to meet with staff from the Evergreen Woods Health and Rehabilitation Center, a not for profit facility located in Spring Hill, FL. I value the time that they took in

travelling to meet with me in Tallahassee, and it is important for me to hear about their issues first hand.

Last week I participated in an interview with Southeast Ag Net, where we spoke about agricultural issues this session, and specifically about the Everglades Restoration Act (SB 768) that I am sponsoring. To listen to the interview, follow this link: <http://southeastagnet.com/2013/04/15/everglades-long-term-plan-a-win-for-ag-and-the-environment/>



During my lunch break while in Session last Wednesday, I took the time to meet with realtors from Pasco and Hernando Counties who were in Tallahassee for the Florida Realtor's Rally for Homeownership. It was good to see friends, neighbors, and familiar faces from around Senate District 18 within the realty profession, and to discuss how we can work together to help encourage the return of the housing market within our state.



I'd like to invite you to visit my webpage at <http://flsenate.gov/Senators/s18> where you can view all of the bills that I am working on during this year's session, sign up to get my media alerts in real time, see more details about my legislation, and track them to see how they progress through committees. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with your questions or concerns at: simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov.

Regards,
Wilton

Everglades Restoration Act Moves Forward

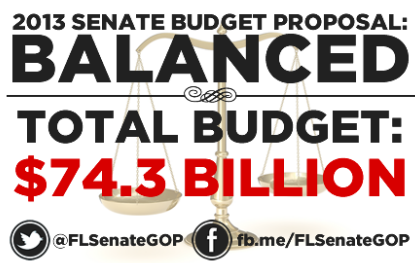
Last Tuesday, the Community Affairs Committee unanimously passed legislation that solidifies a long-term plan to institute the last phase of an Everglades restoration project. My bill (SB 768) will allow for the continued restoration and protection of this delicate ecosystem while allowing farmers to operate responsibly by utilizing best management practices.



The Everglades Restoration Act aims to ensure that the state meets federal water quality standards in the Everglades by reducing pollutants and provides sufficient funding for restoration projects. Environmentalists, the agriculture industry, and lawmakers throughout the state have heralded the plan as a sustainable solution to restoring our state's precious resource. Our Republican caucus looks forward to working with our colleagues in the House

and the Governor to enact this important legislation.

Florida Senate Unanimously Approves Appropriations Act



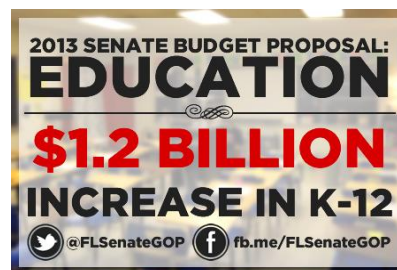
Florida's Senators took up the Senate's version of the 2013-2014 state budget for a vote this week. The budget, which received unanimous bi-partisan support, saves \$2.9 billion in reserves, protects Florida citizens from the uncertainties caused by Washington's "sequestration," and prioritizes investments in education and economic development. In the coming days and weeks, our Senate Republicans look

forward to working with the House of Representatives to craft a single, sustainable budget to present to the Governor.

Senate President Don Gaetz (R-Niceville) said: "The Senate budget reflects Florida's improving economy with investments in critical areas such as K-20 education funding, economic development, and our hard working public employees including teachers, law enforcement and state employees. Under the leadership of Chairman Negron and subcommittee Chairs, we were able to make these investments in Florida's future that are fiscally responsible manner with no new taxes, fees or tuition increases. "

"I am proud that today all 40 Senators joined together to uphold our constitutional obligation to Floridians to live within our means and craft a balanced budget," continued President Gaetz. "Each Senator served on at least two budget committees and I'm grateful that this level of involvement as well as the attention to detail afforded by our intensive budget review led to a product that each Senator can proudly support."

"I'm very pleased with the progress of the Senate's priorities so far this session. We've passed a balanced budget that doesn't raise taxes or fees, invests an additional \$1.2 Billion into our schools, and still sets aside \$2.9 Billion in reserves to make sure that we are planning for the future" said Majority Leader Lizbeth Benacquisto (R-Ft. Myers). "The Senate has also passed strong ethics reform to improve transparency and accountability, and we are implementing educational reforms to improve student achievement and give students greater opportunities to reach their potential. "

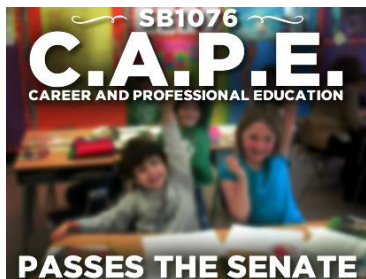


The Senate budget, as well as the implementing and conforming bills, were immediately certified to the Florida House, setting the legislation up for the budget conference, during which the

House and Senate will merge their respective budget proposals to form Florida's General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2013-2014.

Priority Education Bills Pass the Florida Senate

As Session swiftly progresses, Republican Legislators continue their commitment to link Florida's education system to the realities and opportunities in the economy. This week, Senators

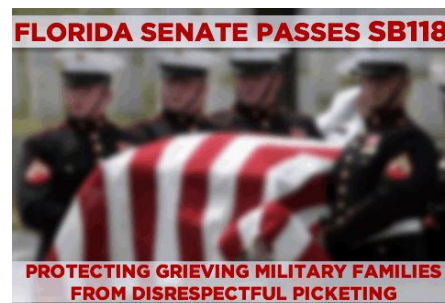


John Legg (R-Lutz) and Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton) saw their education bills pass off the Senate floor and progress to the Florida House of Representatives. Senate Bill 1076, the Career and Professional Education Act, expands industry certifications at the K-20 education levels and promotes post-secondary education by creating opportunities for \$10,000 bachelor's degrees, online diplomas, and preeminent universities. Senate Bill 878, the

Education Accountability Bill, makes improvements to access and security of the data warehouse at the Department of Education as well as ensuring that the school grading system is accurately applied.

Governor Scott Signs Key Bills

This Thursday, Governor Rick Scott signed into law House Bill 15 (Senate Bill 118), which was sponsored in the Senate by Majority Leader Lizbeth Benacquisto (R-Ft. Myers). The law makes disruptions of a military funeral or burial a first degree misdemeanor, banning protests within 500 feet of the property line during or within an hour of the ceremony. The law recognizes the meaningful balance between First Amendment rights and a family's right to grieve in private by only addressing the time, place, and manner of the protests, not the content of the protest.



The governor also signed HB 7003 (SB 138), the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity which was sponsored by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) in the Senate. Since 2008, Florida has been a member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which is an agreement that helps member states address school transition issues for active-duty military families uniformly throughout the nation. The compact will help military families moving to Florida by providing universal solutions in several areas including school

placement, enrollment, records transfer, participation in extracurricular activities, and on-time graduation.

The Governor signed another important bill, HB 155 (SB1030) that prohibits unauthorized slot machine gaming in Florida. The bill, which was substituted for its identical House companion and passed 36 to 4, clarifies current gaming laws concerning slot machines, charitable drawings, game promotions and amusement games.

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