



## Good Morning!

This past week I returned to the State Capitol for the second week of Interim Committee meetings. Thank you Melbourne International Airport, Healthy Start Coalition of Indian River County and Dr. Ann Shortelle with the St. Johns River Water Management District for visiting with me in the Capitol.

Also on Tuesday, Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Tribley) was elected to serve as the President of the Florida Senate for the 2021-2022 Sessions. In his acceptance speech, he discussed his goals which included focusing on the economy, helping at-risk youth, and strengthening efforts to protect and improve water quality in Florida, with an emphasis on addressing septic systems.

*"We need to get serious about a septic-to-sewer program because it's the root cause of many of our pollution problems around the state. It is going to take resources. We need to offer incentives to local government for replacing outdated, harmful systems"* Simpson said. *"Water has no political boundaries. We all benefit when Florida reduces harmful waste into our aquifer and waterways."*

*"I am humbled and honored by the unanimous vote of my caucus colleagues and the steadfast support of my family and friends,"* said President-Designate Simpson. *"We owe it to every Floridian to make sure our service is marked by leaving it better for the next generation. It is going to take a lot of work, but work is what we are made for."*

I am looking forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to ensure that good public policy is passed that benefits all of our citizens.

I consider it a great honor to represent all of the citizens and visitors of District 17. Please share [this link](#) with your friends and family so that they too can sign up for the [Mayfield Minute](#). If you or someone you know needs my assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office. My staff and I are here to serve you!



## Committee Week 2

This past week in Tallahassee, the Senate **Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government** met to hear presentations from Florida's Water Management Districts (WMD) on their completed and in-progress water protection and restoration projects. The Northwest Florida WMD

highlighted septic to sewer conversion projects that have resulted in reducing harmful pollutants, like nitrogen, to the Wakulla Spring by 32,283 pounds per year. The St. Johns River WMD has implemented 250 projects since 2015 that have resulted in a reduction of 1.9 million pounds/year of nitrogen and 395,165 pounds/year of phosphorus to their waterways. The Southwest Florida WMD highlighted one of their greatest success stories, the restoration of seagrasses in Tampa Bay. In 1988 seagrasses had been reduced to just 23,000 acres in Tampa Bay, however with the implementation of legislation and restoration projects, seagrasses have rebounded to now covering more than 40,000 acres. You may view these presentations at [FLSenate.gov](https://www.flsenate.gov).

The **Environment and Natural Resources Committee** met for a presentation from Jared Moskowitz, Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, on Hurricanes Dorian and Michael recovery. He highlighted the tremendous preparedness efforts that were taken for Hurricane Dorian, including cost-savings for the state by coordinating with private industry to move essential resources. In organizing supplies and response teams, he said that FDEM and utility response workers were in place to respond in hours, rather than days. The Office of Insurance Regulation estimated there were approximately \$19 million in insured losses from Hurricane Dorian. Hurricane Michael, which devastated parts of the Panhandle in 2018, generated approximately \$7 billion in estimated insured losses. The majority of these claims have been closed.

The **Health Policy Committee** met for presentations from the Florida Department of Health (DOH) on Children's Medical Services Program and Florida's participation in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. We also considered the following bills: [Senate Bill \(SB\) 58](#) would create a prescription drug "repository" program at the DOH, allowing health-care companies and providers to donate prescription drugs that would be dispensed to poor, uninsured or underinsured patients. [SB 100](#) authorizes individuals licensed to prescribe medicinal drugs to dispense a 48-hour supply, rather than a 24-hour supply, to patients. [SB 230](#) requires the DOH to develop strategies to maximize federal-state partnerships that provide incentives for physicians to practice in medically underserved or rural areas. All bills were reported out of committee favorably.

The **Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee** met to hear the strategic plan of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) by Secretary Chad Poppell. He outlined ways to move DCF from a crisis-response agency to a prevention-focused agency, including an increased focus on addressing hunger, drug addiction and employment. The Committee also considered the following bills: [SB 136](#) allows military veterans and service members who adopt a child through the state child welfare system to receive monetary benefits; and allows qualifying state employees to qualify for a one-time benefit. [SB 158](#) increases the age that a child restraint device is needed from age five years or younger, to six years. And increases the age that a separate carrier, like a booster seat, is required to four through six years. [SB 236](#) supports an Early Childhood Court program that addresses cases involving children typically under the age of three and uses specialized dockets, multidisciplinary teams, evidence-based treatment and a nonadversarial approach. All bills were reported out of committee favorably.

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## Expediting Water Quality Improvements

Governor Ron DeSantis recently announced proposed legislation for the 2020 Legislative Session that will expedite water quality improvements throughout Florida.

*"The health of our state depends on the health and quality of our water," said Governor DeSantis. "That is why I am proposing legislation to expedite the improvement of our water quality throughout Florida. These comprehensive proposals, recommended by the Blue-Green Algae Task Force, will greatly aid the Department of Environmental Protection in our mission to enhance the quality of our state's most precious natural resource."*

The proposed legislation furthers the directives outlined in Governor DeSantis' Executive Order 19-12 and is based on the recommendations of The Blue-Green Algae Task Force. The Task Force, through its

discussion and deliberations, provides guidance and specific, science-based recommendations with the goal of expediting improvements and restoration of Florida's water bodies that have been adversely affected by blue-green algae blooms.

The Task Force received input from a variety of stakeholders and identified runoff from onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, sanitary sewer overflows, agricultural lands, and stormwater runoff as some of the most significant sources of nutrient pollution. They also made recommendations to improve the state's policies and programs to achieve targeted nutrient reductions and protect public health.

The proposed legislation does the following, based on topic:

- **Wastewater Infrastructure and Sanitary Sewer Overflows:** Requires utilities to develop inspection, maintenance and replacement plans for their wastewater systems, rather than allowing these systems to age and fall into despair. Gives the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) the authority to intervene by inspecting these systems and requiring appropriate proactive measures to upkeep wastewater facilities and better avoid future discharges.
- **Biosolids:** Ratifies rules that will be adopted by DEP to ensure biosolids are only applied to land that is high enough and dry enough to prevent interaction with groundwater.
- **Septic Systems:** Transfers the authority of septic tank inspection from the DOH to DEP to ensure environmental harm by septic systems is accounted for. Requires plans for the improvement of impaired water bodies, known as Basin Management Action Plans, to include septic remediation plans
- **Agriculture:** Requires DEP to coordinate with top academic institutions to annually send the most updated research to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) to ensure agricultural best management practices are grounded in the most up-to-date science. Requires onsite verification of best management practices (BMPs) for each enrolled producer at least every two years. Requires DACS to provide DEP and WMDs the types and amounts of nutrients BMP enrollees are tracking on agricultural products.
- **Stormwater:** Directs DEP to adopt rules to ensure that stormwater systems throughout the state reflect the most up-to-date science and contemplate environmental harm.

During the 2019 Legislative Session, I filed [SB 1758 The Clean Waterways Act](#) to address these issues outlined above. Any lasting solutions to improve water quality must address aging sewage treatment infrastructure, eliminating wastewater spills, septic to sewer conversions and biosolid disposal. I look forward to working with Governor DeSantis to implement these reforms and make cleaner waterways a reality.

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## District 17 Highlights

### Vero Beach Centennial Celebration

The City of Vero was first incorporated in 1919, and shortly after was renamed Vero Beach. The small community originally consisted of just three houses and a general store and ultimately received its name when a Post Office was established. Original residents included Postmaster Henry Gifford, Samuel Hughes and George Smith. There were also huts along the river, and various homes along the beach area.

One hundred years later, Vero Beach was named one of the "Top Ten Happiest Seaside Towns in America" by Coastal Living Magazine. There have been many events held over the last year to celebrate Vero Beach and on Saturday, October 26, 2019 you can join in the Centennial Celebration Grand Finale.

This will include a downtown parade beginning at 10:00 AM along 14th Avenue around the Heritage Center to North of the Old Vero Beach Railroad Station. There will be street food, music and entertainment

honoring our founding fathers and pioneer families. Vendors will also be located inside the Heritage Center with fun activities, goodies and more. For more information visit [VeroBeach100.org](http://VeroBeach100.org).

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## **St. Johns Heritage Parkway in Palm Bay**

Earlier this year a constituent called my office questioning when the I-95 Interchange at St. Johns Heritage Parkway (SJHP) in Palm Bay would be opening. For the past few months I have been following this issue closely.

The SJHP was developed to provide a 5-mile arterial roadway extending from the Palm Bay city limits north to Ellis Road. The goal of the Parkway was to reduce congestion on I-95, provide more efficient access for local motorists, and connect roadways that will serve as emergency evacuation routes.

The City of Palm Bay signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in May 2013, which outlined the construction schedule for the SJHP project. This construction schedule hinged on the City's commitment to have completed the connection to a public roadway network.

Due to delays by the City, FDOT has incurred more than \$475,000 in additional costs. These costs account for rerouting of the main power supply line to the interchange, signing modifications, and additional maintenance of traffic to keep the interchange closed until the City's connecting road is complete.

It is my understanding that area developers had originally agreed to contribute funds to complete the connecting road, an agreement that was not formally documented or properly executed.

This past week my office met with the City of Palm Bay, Brevard County, FDOT and the Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to discuss when the interchange would be open. The City of Palm Bay expressed that it would be open in December 2019.

My office is working with the state and the TPO to find ways to expedite the completion of the connecting road. I will also be exploring options available to hold those parties that have caused these delays accountable.

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## **Treasure Coast Food Bank 5th Annual Pack the House**

The Treasure Coast Food Bank will be hosting its 5th Annual "Pack the House" event to build 10,000 holiday meal boxes to distribute to families in need along the Treasure Coast.

5th Annual Pack the House  
Friday, October 25th  
Beginning at 8:00 AM  
401 Angle Road, Fort Pierce

Founded in 1988, the Treasure Coast Food Bank works to alleviate hunger on Florida's Treasure Coast. They serve as the only food bank in a four-county region including Indian River, Martin, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties. In just 24-hours, hundreds of volunteers will join together on October 25th to make a difference in the lives of children, seniors and families that are struggling with hunger in our community. You can sign up to volunteer for a shift online at [StopHunger.org](http://StopHunger.org) or call (772) 489-3034.

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