

LORANNE AUSLEY
STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 3

THE AUSLEY UPDATE



THE WEEKLY RECAP VIDEO

SENATOR AUSLEY



THE WEEKLY RECAP

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Florida Children's Week

This week is my favorite week of the legislative session – Florida Children's Week!

Florida Children's Week has been a signature event in the Florida Capitol since Lawton Chiles was our Governor. It is always a great celebration and an opportunity to highlight the diverse needs of Florida's children. My

favorite Children's Week tradition is the "Hanging of the Hands," which is a collection of tens of thousands of pieces of children's artwork created each year in schools and child care centers around the state. On Sunday night, advocates spend hours literally hanging the "hands" from the 3rd floor of the Capitol Rotunda to create an overwhelmingly beautiful display. Every year, my breath is taken away when I walk into the Rotunda and see the thousands of tiny hands representing thousands of children who are counting on us to do the right thing. I hope my colleagues are equally impacted.



I had such fun on Tuesday morning watching the buses unload kids in front of the Capitol, and then looking out from my office window to see all of the activities--painting, dancing, reading – such positive energy and happiness. And such an important reminder that our job as legislators is to make sure that every child in Florida has the opportunity to learn and thrive.



FLORIDA YOUTH SHINE

Another highlight of Children's Week was the opportunity to meet with the amazing kids from Florida Youth Shine – all current or former foster kids. This youth-run organization advocates for positive change in the foster care system, like the Foster Children's Bill of Rights that we are working on together. Their stories and experiences are compelling and inspiring, and I am really hoping that this will be the year that we can get this bill passed!



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

It's hard to believe it is already February, which is Black History Month. I am looking forward to a month full of events and activities. We should honor the contributions and achievements of Black Americans by acknowledging our full and shared history--not just in a single month, but every day, all year long.



I've mentioned Black History Month and Children's Week, but this week also included:

Dentists' Day on the Hill

Florida Heart Day Catholic Day Miami-Dade Day Florida School Board Association Day Seaports Day

HIGHLIGHTS

I got OUT of the office to speak to the Jefferson County Kiwanis Club, and a statewide group of Machinists, and met IN the office with dentists, school board members, lunch ladies and craft distillers.



We even had a celebrity visit from the Bravo TV series Below Deck Mediterranean. Captain Sandy Yawn is a Fort Lauderdale native with more than three decades of yachting experience. She is passionate about creating pathways for kids to work in the marine industries. And she loves my bill that creates an “Office of Blue Economy” to make sure that we are truly leveraging the value of our coastal resources. Think about it -- Florida’s coastal economy employs more than 6 million people and generates \$750 billion in gross

domestic product – there is so much opportunity and I am looking forward to working with Captain Sandy to make sure we are acknowledging the importance of the “blue economy” to Florida’s bottom line. It was also great to show her the nautical map in my office showing over 140 miles of coastline in Senate District 3 stretching from Port St. Joe to Steinhatchee!



BILLS and BUDGET

I'm happy to report that two of my bills passed unanimously out of their first committees this week. ***The Brownfields to Brightfields Act (SB1562)*** calls for a study to look at whether brownfields and landfills could be repurposed as solar farms. This is really a no brainer - taking unproductive blighted land and making it productive with solar panels. What a great idea for the Sunshine State!

The other bill (***SB 290, Surplus State Owned Non-Conservation Lands***) doesn't have nearly as cool of a name, but it will help small fiscally constrained counties who want to acquire state lands or buildings that are no longer being used.

This week we saw our first glimpse at the budget for next year. While I'm cautiously optimistic with what I have seen so far– there is a LONG way to go before we can celebrate. Stay tuned for more on that as we move through the budget process in the coming weeks.

DINING IN THE DARK

Last weekend we attended the “Dining in the Dark” dinner which is just what it sounds – a dinner completely in the dark to simulate the experience of the visually impaired. This is an annual fundraiser for the Lighthouse of the Big Bend. If you ever have a chance to participate in something like this – you should really do it. And I must share a proud mom moment – Will Hollimon was the recipient of the Paula Bailey Inspiration Award! Thanks so much to the Lighthouse for the work they do every day to serve the needs of the

visually impaired across the Big Bend.



I will be taking to the streets on Sunday morning to run the Tallahassee Half Marathon. If you are in Tallahassee this weekend, be sure to check out the road closures, and come on out to cheer on the runners -- it should be a perfect morning!

Sincerely,

Lorraine Ausley
Senator, District 3

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