



# THE BERMAN BRIEFING

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SENATE DISTRICT 31

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION: WEEK SIX



STATE SENATOR  
**LORI BERMAN**  
Senate Democratic  
Policy Chair

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Environment, and  
General Government

Finance and Tax

Education

Transportation

Ethics & Elections

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Week Six of our 2021 legislative session is now over, completing two-thirds of our annual session. Stay tuned and involved - these final three weeks move quickly and a lot will occur. This week's update is below.

While around 11.4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to Floridians, and almost 20% of our population are fully vaccinated, it is important to continue practicing social distancing and safety measures such as washing your hands often and wearing masks. Stay well and healthy.

Lori

Senate Democratic Policy Chair

### IMPORTANT VACCINE UPDATES

The [EMERGENCY ORDER 2021-003](#) ISSUED EXTENDING FACIAL COVERINGS TO 04/18/21

\*NEW\* [Interactive vaccination locator map](#)

[Vaccine Information Flyer](#)

### Health Care District Opens Online Appointment Scheduling for Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County opened 20,000 first-dose vaccination appointments for scheduling through Saturday, April 17, 2021 at <http://vaccine.hcdpbc.org> [vaccine.hcdpbc.org] for Pfizer and Moderna vaccine. Individuals 16 years and 17 years old are eligible to self-schedule appointments for the Pfizer vaccine brand only. A parent or guardian must be present at the appointment of those who are 16 and 17 years old.

### \*NEW\* [Emergency Rental Assistance and Utility Assistance](#)

The Palm Beach County Community Services Department opened its online portal for Emergency Rental Assistance, Relocation Assistance and Utility Assistance on March 10th. For more information, click [here](#).

## **Vaccines for Homebound Seniors**

E-mail [HomeboundVaccine@em.myflorida.com](mailto:HomeboundVaccine@em.myflorida.com) with your name and phone number to put in your request for a vaccine for homebound seniors. Someone from the Florida Division of Emergency Management will contact you within 72 hours to collect more information and schedule your appointment. At this time, FDEM is not accepting phone calls for homebound vaccination appointments.

## **Other Vaccine Information**

**Florida Health Vaccine Information Page**

**Florida Health - Palm Beach County Vaccine Information Page**

**DOH Appointment Hotline: 866-201-6754**

**Palm Beach County Health Care District Vaccine Information Page**

**Publix Pharmacy Vaccine Information Page**

**CVS Pharmacy Vaccine Information Page**

**Winn Dixie Vaccine Information Page (Hypoluxo Rd, Lake Worth only)**

**Wal-Mart Vaccine Information Page**

**Walgreens Vaccination Information Page**

## **City of Boynton Beach:**

The City of Boynton Beach expects to re-open their vaccine portal on Tuesday, April 13. Appointments are available for Florida residents 18+. Vaccines will be administered by Boynton Beach Fire Rescue at the Ezell Hester, Jr. Comm. Ctr. In the event of appointment cancellations, the City has created a Vaccine Stand-By list. Learn more and find FAQ. Questions? 561-742-6010.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM @ PALM BEACH COUNTY LIBRARY**

**Palm Beach County Feeding Sites Interactive Map**

## **KEEPING UP WITH BERMAN'S BILLS**

### **SB 1164: Days of Remembrance and Holocaust Remembrance Day**

Establishes the week of April 4-11, 2021 as the "Days of Remembrance" and April 8, 2021, as "Holocaust Remembrance Day" in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, in honor of its survivors, and in utmost gratitude for the risks taken by rescuers and liberators. The Resolution was adopted on Wednesday, April 7th, on the floor of the Senate.

### **SB 1954: Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience**

A multipart plan to deal with rising sea levels caused by climate change passed both the Senate and House Thursday and now heads to the Governor's desk for signature. A bill I filed, SB 1252, was incorporated into this resilience package, requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to analyze future expenditures by federal, state, regional, and local governments necessary to improve resilience to inland and coastal flooding on a 50-year planning period. SB 1954 will create the Resilient Florida Grant Program, authorizing the Department of Environmental Protection to provide grants to local governments to combat rising sea levels. A rising sea will have major impacts on Florida's real estate, valued at over \$130 billion, on half of our beaches, and on substantial critical infrastructure. Resilience and adaptation are important, but without mitigation strategies, like lowering our greenhouse gas emissions, we'll have done nothing to address the root cause of our changing climate.

## **BILLS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **SB 76: Property Insurance**

SB 76 passed the Senate Floor and is in messages in the House. Over the past year, Florida's homeowner's insurance rates have increased by hundreds of dollars. This increase is attributed to record-setting hurricanes that have led to an increased number of catastrophe claims, reinsurance costs, and costs of insurance litigation. SB 76 was filed in an attempt to combat these issues. The bill would allow insurance companies to change the way they cover older roofs and removes an optional attorney's fee multiplier that can be imposed by a judge in certain cases. It also attempts to tackle the issue of increased litigation by creating a uniform two-year filing deadline for property insurance claims, supplemental claims, or reopen claims and requires a 60-day notice of a property insurance claim prior to litigation. The bill has the potential to leave homeowners in the dark about their insurance

matters, harm homeowners' ability to retain counsel, and encourages insurance companies to deny or delay payment. I voted against this bill on the Senate Floor.

### **SB 84: Retirement**

SB 84 passed the Senate Floor on Thursday. The bill closes the Florida Retirement System's traditional pension plan for future employees and instead requires participation in an investment plan that is dependent on the stock market, similar to a 401(k) plan. It reduces the flow of income to the pension fund and ties the fund's health to Wall Street. If the pension is closed, the Legislature must step in and subsidize the funds until all current participants die. Over the next ten years, this will likely cost billions. I also voted no this bill.

### **SB 86: Student Financial Aid**

SB 86 passed the Senate Floor on Thursday. The bill evolved since its initial introduction but still leaves us with many concerns. It removes guarantees of 100% and 75% funding for the Florida Academic and Medallion Scholars and ties the program to our annual budget, clearing the path for future Legislatures to gut the program. It also specifies that the 2021-2022 academic year is the final year for students to qualify for the Benacquisto Scholarship Program and requires the creation of an online career readiness dashboard. Changing the funding for the Bright Futures Scholarship makes it uncertain how much students will receive for their Bright Futures Scholarships for a given year. Bright Futures has been critical in sending Florida's best and brightest students to our public universities at an affordable rate. It will change the "Bright Futures" of our students into "Uncertain Ones," and they deserve better.

### **SB 2512: Documentary Stamp Taxes**

This bill has been the subject of recent contention and successfully passed the Senate on Wednesday and the House on Thursday. It is now on its way to the Governor. The bill diverts money away from the Sadowski Fund for affordable housing and reallocates \$111.7 million to sewage projects and \$111.7 million to sea level rise resiliency. While these projects are necessary, the American Rescue Plan is sending \$10 billion to Florida. Nevertheless, the bill included a provision mandating that no more than 50% of the Sadowski Fund may be reallocated to other programs in future years, as it is a common source of funding.

All the best,



Lori Berman  
State Senator, District 31

