

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2021 Legislative Session

Week 9 - Day 60

April 30, 2021

Gavel Down and Drop the Hankies

Last week, best week, scariest week of the legislative session. Today's *Frontline* will give you the highlights of where we landed but be on the lookout for our **End of Session Report**, which will give you all the down and dirty of what passed and what didn't this session.

Budget Rundown

On Tuesday, the House and Senate finalized their budget and placed the budget "on the desk" of members, which began the mandatory 72-hour "cooling off period" to provide time for legislators and the public to read what has been included. This year, thanks to the federal stimulus funds, the budget which normally hovers around \$90 billion, tapped out at **\$101.5 billion** for fiscal year 2021-2022 while putting **\$6 billion** in reserves for "rainy day funds." One good change for state employees is that they raised the minimum wage for state employees to \$13 an hour. Education budget highlights are below.

PreK-12 Education budget included the following:

- **\$22.8 billion** in total funds for the K-12 FEFP with **\$12.9 billion** coming from state funds and **\$9.9 billion** from local funds.
- **\$1.9 billion** for early learning programs.
- The House did not roll back the "required local effort," which generated an additional **\$201.4 million** in funds.
- **\$53.42** increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by 1.2% or \$4,372.91 per student.
- **\$50 million** increase in the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA) categorical – bringing the total to **\$550 million**. However, districts will lose funds to private schools for students receiving vouchers in the Empowerment, Gardiner and McKay programs.
- Increase by **\$20 million** for a total of **\$120 million** for the Mental Health Assistance Allocation.

- **\$1.8 billion** in federal stimulus funds that can be used for student remediation of learning losses.
- **\$216 million** in federal stimulus funds for one-time \$1,000 bonuses for classroom teachers and principals, and **\$166 million** in federal stimulus funds for two \$1,000 bonuses for early learning instructors across Florida.
- The rest of the federal aid — **\$6.8 billion** — will be placed in state reserves and will be released to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) when it submits detailed plans that describe how the funds will be used in accordance with the American Rescue Plan's education relief fund. The budget language, however, does not say who the plan needs to be submitted to or whether the plans would need approval from the Legislature or the governor.
- **\$182.9 million** for charter school repairs, **\$2.7 million** for maintenance for the School for the Deaf and Blind, and **\$210 million** for special facility construction in rural districts (Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Jackson, Levy, Okeechobee).
- Maintained the Turnaround Supplemental Services Allocation for schools in turnaround and funded at **\$24.4 million**.
- FEFP decreased by **\$149.1 million** due to the decline in student enrollment related to the effects of Covid-19.
- Student Reserve Allocation of **\$464.3 million** in General Revenue set aside, which can be used for districts that have an increase in enrollment next year as more students return to school.
- **\$42 million** for school hardening grants.

Higher Education budget included the following:

- **\$2 billion** for Florida College System and **\$5.3 billion** for the State University System.
- Tuition and fees, as well as funding for need-based financial aid, are held at current levels and were not cut as originally proposed.
- **\$26 million** for college system school maintenance and **\$37.8 million** for state university school maintenance.
- **\$982.6 billion** in student financial aid, of which **\$623.3 million** is for Bright Futures scholarships. Despite an effort to amend the Bright Futures awards this session, the student awards remain at levels consistent with current law, but the \$600 textbook stipend was eliminated.
- The budget maintains the following performance funding at career technical centers, state colleges and state universities: **\$6.5 million** for students earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at career technical centers; **\$14 million** for students earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at Florida colleges; **\$30 million** in performance funding for state colleges through the 2+2 Student Success Incentive Fund and the Work Florida Student Success Incentive Fund; and **\$560 million** in performance funding for state universities.

In addition to the funding provided through the state budget, Florida's higher education institutions received over **\$873.9 million** from the CARES Act and **\$1.26 billion** from the CRRSA Act.

What Passed, What Failed

What Died

Thanks to all the efforts of our members and fellow union brothers and sisters, **HB 835/SB 1014**, legislation that would have taken away your freedoms to join and maintain your union membership, died this session. Thanks also to considerable effort by our members, **SB 84**, which would have closed the defined benefit pension program to new members outside special risk class (police, firefighters and corrections officers), also died this session.

Big congratulations to our United Faculty of Florida (UFF) members who worked tirelessly to stop college and university presidential searches from being conducted in secrecy. **SB 220**, which required a two-thirds vote because it would have created an exemption to Florida's "Sunshine Law" (public records), easily passed in the House but was stopped in the Senate.

Unfortunately, legislation that was priority for FEA – including bills to create multi-year or extended contracts for our annual contract teachers, a guaranteed cost of living adjustment for retirement, legislation to give districts the ability to eliminate multiple salary schedules as mandated in statute, and graduate student fee waiver bills – were never given a single hearing.

What Passed

The largest expansion in vouchers in several years – **HB 7045** – passed both chambers and is on the way to the governor, where we expect he will sign the bill into law.

One of the largest expansions in PreK education – **HB 419**, which struggled to pass the past few sessions – finally crossed the finish line. This bill will require accountability for both public and private PreK programs.

HB 5101, which will make it harder for school districts and unions to bargain non-compressed salary schedules, passed and is on its way to the governor.

HB 259, if signed into law, will now permit a religious institution that uses a public K-12 or higher education facility for worship services, to be able to permit their congregation to conceal carry on school property during worship services.

Also on its way to the governor, **HB 149** will create a uniform procedure for the use of restraining a child in school and the reporting that comes with it, but will also permit parents in Broward County to request cameras be placed in self-contained emotional/behavioral disabled classrooms.

Georgia-style election “reform” legislation passed. **SB 90**, which will make it harder for people to vote in Florida, is on its way to the governor.

After stopping this bill last year, UFF will now face mandatory “intellectual freedom and diversity” at college campuses when **HB 233** is signed into law.

Finally, the “Combatting Public Disorder” bill became law upon the governor’s signature last week. Among other provisions, **HB 1** will make everyone who joins or participates in a rally or march where even one person violates the law, subject to arrest – even if they were following the law.

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