

Update from Jennifer Goen (3/25/2010)

Now that the budgets have been released and bills are starting to move (or not move), I wanted to provide you with a brief update regarding some of the top issues the SUS lobbyists are monitoring. Over the weekend, I provided a side by side of the budget from each chamber and have subsequently updated the information with the Senate PECO allocation. Additionally, I attached the retirement portion of the House proposed budget.

Several bills were filed by members regarding state retirement. SUS lobbyist have consistently monitored legislation and worked with leadership to identify the vehicle and language of the House and Senate proposals. It is my understanding from our communication the retirement issue will be determined during the budget process and not by member bills. Several of the retirement bills containing provisions to reduce benefits have been withdrawn, never heard or temporarily postponed. We will provide any new proposals regarding budget issues as they become available and send an interim report on the budget after both chambers finish their floor actions on the budget next week. Below is a brief OPPAGA summary with a link to the report on employee compensation, which may explain the some of the Legislatures actions regarding state benefits and potential cost savings.

Report Summary

- In Fiscal Year 2008-09, Florida's total compensation costs for its nearly 122,000 non-university employees totaled \$6.5 billion. About three-quarters (76%) was for wages, while 24% was for benefits. Insurance is the most costly employee benefit, followed by retirement and leave.

- Many states are considering actions to reduce employee compensation costs as a means of addressing budget shortfalls. The Legislature could consider several options for reducing compensation costs for Florida's state employees. These options have advantages and disadvantages, as well as varying fiscal impacts.

Report PDF Link

<http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/1031rpt.pdf>
<<http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/1031rpt.pdf>>

In addition to these important issues, several bills of interest are making their way through the Legislative process. Below are brief updates regarding those issues.

Education

SB 6, Teacher Performance by Senator Thrasher has passed the Senate and will be taken up in the House later today. It is my understanding this bill is on a fast track for passage.

SB 4, Education Accountability by Senator Deter has passed the full Senate.

SB 2, Class Size Amendment by Senator Gaetz passed the Senate 26-12 today. The House companion will be taken up 3/31.

SB 778, Green Fee by Senator Constantine has been heard in committees, but the House companion has not been heard.

SB 1088, Graduate Asst Insurance by Senator Ring will be heard later today in its first Committee. No House companion filed.

Other

HB 1337, Nursing Graduation Requirements by Representative Grimsley has been heard in several committees. The Senate companion will be heard later today.

SB 1706, Contracting by Senator Alexander will be heard later today in committee. The House companion has not been heard.