



# THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

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Florida's Old and New Capitols

Greetings from Tallahassee! Last Tuesday marked the beginning of the 111th Regular Session of the Florida House of Representatives, and so far things have been very busy. On March 3rd Rep. Larry Cretul, of Ocala, was sworn in as the new Speaker of the House. That evening we were joined by the Senate to listen to Governor Charlie Crist's annual State of the State address. At no time has our state faced a broader and more difficult set of challenges, but as we work throughout this session I will be sure to keep the most important issues in mind: revitalizing our economy and creating much-needed jobs for our workforce.

*-Rep. Debbie Mayfield*



Rep. Mayfield with Patty Baker, of Vero Beach, in Tallahassee

## HEART RESEARCH BILL– HB 361

Last week one of my bills, the Heart Research Bill, or House Bill 361, was brought up for consideration in the House Roads, Bridges and Ports Policy Committee. This bill authorizes the addition of a \$1 voluntary contribution check-off for the Florida Heart Research Institute on the application and renewal applications for a Florida driver's license.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death for

women in the United States, and in 2006 approximately 652,000 Americans died as a result of heart disease.

The Florida Heart Research Institute, founded in 1944, was the first heart hospital and research center in the world and it is world-renowned for its visionary accomplishments in the research and treatment of cardiovascular disease.

If passed and adopted, this bill could help generate an estimated \$60,000 per year for the Florida Heart Research Institute. All of this money would go directly to the research, education, and prevention of heart disease.

On Wednesday morning I presented HB 361 to the House Roads, Bridges, and Ports Policy Committee and it was found favorable by a vote of 18-0.

If you have any issues, questions, or concerns, please feel free to contact our district secretary, Bethany Fretwell, at (772) 778-5077 or toll-free at (866) 957-7289.

For more detailed information on legislative issues, please check out the Florida Legislature's website!  
[www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov)



## BUDGET

With the state economy struggling, House members are continuing to scrutinize the state budget line-by-line looking for duplication, inefficiencies, and other non-essential activities on which the state could stop spending taxpayer dollars. We are still early in the budget process, but it is already clear that balancing the budget will be a tough challenge. Just like Florida's families, we are going to prioritize our spending on core issues like health care, classroom education, and public safety.

Legislators were also informed last week of something that many of us had already anticipated: the continued decline in property values is affecting the amount of tax dollars available for education funding this year. Florida property values are 12 percent lower than state economists had estimated, accounting for a \$200 billion reduction in overall taxable property values. This change in property values will make it very hard for legislators to meet the budgetary goals set just a few weeks ago by Governor Crist, who had used the old, higher property values when setting his budget for education.



The House Chamber on March 3, 2009, the opening day of the 2009 Regular Session.

## THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

In the 2009 Session, the steps a bill must go through to make it to the floor are a little bit different. In previous years, each house council handled both policy and budget legislative issues. This session we have separate appropriation councils and policy councils. In order to make it to the floor for a vote, a bill with fiscal implications has to be found favorable in both policy and appropriations councils and committees.

## STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS

Legislation to help create jobs and revitalize Florida's economy by streamlining bureaucracy in Florida's permitting process won unanimous approval from the House Governmental Affairs Policy Committee last week. My fellow committee members and myself voted on Friday to approve House Bill (HB) 73 by Representative Robert Schenck. This bill eliminates delays for companies attempting to establish businesses in Florida by requiring the Department of Environmental Protection and water management districts to adopt programs that create a 45-day expedited permitting process for businesses identified by a municipality or county as engaging in one of the target industries in Florida. The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Committee, of which I am also a member, is working on this issue from an environmental and agricultural position. I will continue to work with my committees on this issue and to look for ways to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic red tape for businesses in Florida to help stimulate our lagging economy.