



THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

Volume 2, Issue 16

June 4, 2010

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Florida's Old and New Capitols

This year the Florida Legislature had the difficult task of recharging our state's economy while addressing a nearly three billion dollar deficit in the state's operating budget.

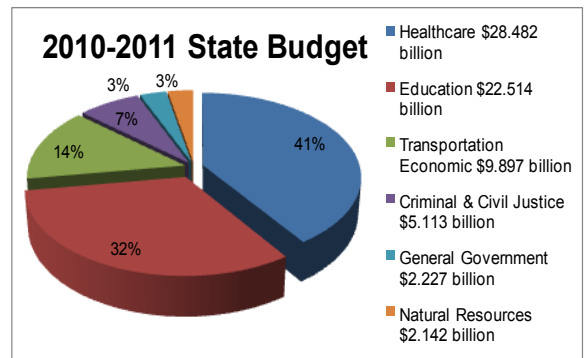
As part of this effort, I believe strongly that state government must make difficult choices and responsible decisions to hold the line on state spending and not increase taxes. All Floridians share in this responsibility, and as state legislators we must do our part to be part of the solution.

-Rep. Debbie Mayfield

2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Florida's Constitution requires a balanced budget and, unlike the U.S. Congress, we cannot spend money that we do not have. Legislators were again forced to make the best of available revenues and to focus on the state's most important priorities.

I'm pleased to share with you that, first and foremost, the Legislature met its constitutional obligation to pass what I believe was a responsibly balanced budget. We did this in the same manner Florida's families and small businesses handle their finances around the kitchen tables and conference tables all across the state – by deciding not to spend more than Floridians can afford and making tough decisions that I believe are in the long-term best interest of our state's financial future. For me, this meant focusing on the core missions of government – keeping our families and neighborhoods safe, providing our children with the opportunity for a world-class education and providing critical health care for the most vulnerable among us.

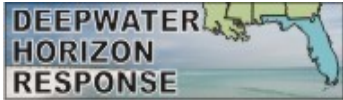


The Legislature also made keeping adequate reserves for the nation's fourth largest state a priority. These reserves are like short-term savings for the state. They help the state manage its budget in times when revenues are down, and they help the state to continue to maintain its AAA bond rating. Florida is the only large state in the nation to earn this top rating, and having that top tier rating saves taxpayers millions of dollars each year; it means billions of dollars in savings long-term. The reserves the Legislature set aside last year helped manage the state's unplanned and increasing Medicaid costs without having to impact the budget. Our prudence in that regard could help us avert a similar problem this year as well.

Even in tight fiscal times, the Legislature has increased per-student funding in our schools by \$111 million over current amounts, promoted safer communities by ensuring that criminals will be brought to justice and remain in prison, and have increased our overall healthcare funding. These and other priorities have been accomplished without any increases in taxes. We have worked hard to make responsible decisions that should help place Florida in the best position possible for growth and prosperity once the economy recovers.

Should you have any state constituent issues, please do not hesitate to contact Heather Dean in my Vero Beach office at (772) 778-5077.

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BACKGROUND SCREENING

Protecting the safety and security of the public is a fundamental role of government. Floridians deserve a justice system that guarantees due process, a corrections system that provides secure prisons and law enforcement that protects and serves all Floridians. In this tight budget year, the Florida House focused on funding the core functions of the courts, prisons and law enforcement without having to resort to restricting access to our courts or early release of dangerous criminals into our neighborhoods and communities.

Every day Floridians entrust their loved ones to caregivers and expect they will be treated with care and not preyed upon by criminals. This year we increased the protection to our loved ones by passing significant legislation to close loopholes in the background screening process. The legislation provides that no one can begin working with children, disabled adults or adults over 65 years of age until after a background screening is completed and the applicant is found to be qualified. More importantly, the legislation provides that sexual predators will never receive an exemption to work with vulnerable populations.

Keeping Floridians safe is my highest priority, and the House of Representatives has worked hard this session within our tight budget to accomplish this goal.

VBHS ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM



Thank you to Sue DeBlois of the Vero Beach High School Environmental Technology Program for hosting me on a recent tour! This wonderful program introduces students to a variety of environmental topics including alternative energies, land management, hydroponics, career options and more.

CRACKING DOWN ON PILL MILLS

I was happy to learn that Indian River County, the City of Vero Beach and the City of Sebastian are taking the issue of pill mills seriously. This problem of "pill mills" and the abuse of prescription painkillers has become a major issue for Florida. This year, to help crackdown on this growing threat to our communities, the Legislature passed legislation to deal with the unscrupulous pain clinics around the state. Pain clinics in South Florida attract patients from all over the country; more oxycodone is distributed in Florida than in any other state. The 50 doctors who dispense the most oxycodone in the entire country are all in Florida. A major factor contributing to these alarming statistics are Florida's "dispensing practitioners" who dispense drugs directly from their offices.



The legislation passed will prohibit such physicians from dispensing more than a 72-hour supply of controlled substances to a patient. Violators of this new law will face a 3rd degree felony charge with up to 5 years in prison and or fines up to \$5,000. The bill also prohibits physicians from the advertising or promoting the use, sale or dispensing of a controlled substance. The legislation also places greater regulations on pain clinics by requiring them to register with the Department of Health and submit to annual inspections. Violations of the regulations set forth in the new law will result in significant financial penalties.

Florida is known for many things- our attractions, our beautiful weather, and our beaches. We are doing our best to make sure we are no longer also known as the pill mill capital of the United States.