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Florida House of Representatives**

THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

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Florida's Old and New Capitols

***H**appy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and Holiday Season. Just last week I was in Tallahassee for the inauguration of Florida's 45th Governor Rick Scott. With the swearing in of Governor Scott and Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll, we also ushered in a new Florida Cabinet made up of Attorney General Pam Bondi, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, and Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam. Along with House Speaker Dean Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos, I believe we have the leadership in place to move Florida in the right direction. It is certainly an exciting time for our state and I stand ready to work hard representing the citizens of District 80 and the State of Florida with this exceptional new team of leaders!*

This is the first issue of Volume 3 of the Mayfield Minute and my third year heading into session. This week I am back in Tallahassee for our first week of committee meetings. This year I am proud to serve as Vice Chair of both Government Operations Appropriations Subcommittee and Government Operations Subcommittee. I also serve on Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee; Finance & Tax Committee; and State Affairs Committee. I appreciate the confidence that Speaker Cannon has in my abilities and I can't wait to get to work!

FLORIDA'S BUDGET PROCESS

Florida's state budget is funded primarily by sales taxes, while local governments have their own budgets funded primarily by local property taxes. The main job of the Legislature, set out in the state Constitution, is to set the state's annual budget. Florida has a Balanced Budget Amendment, so the state cannot adopt a deficit budget. This year our state is facing a projected \$3.6 billion budget gap.

In December, the Florida Legislature began the process of working on issues and developing the 2011-2012 budget. The House and Senate will both hold five weeks of committee meetings in January and February in preparation for the 60-day Regular Session, which will begin this year on March 8 and run through May 6. The session opens with the Governor's State of the State speech before the House and Senate.

Using recommendations from the Governor and state agencies, the House and Senate each prepare a version of the budget. This year, Representative Denise Grimsley will chair the Appropriations Committee on the House side and Senator JD Alexander will chair the Appropriations Committee on the Senate side. The two budgets are generally submitted to a Joint Conference Committee that has members from both houses. This Committee works toward reconciling differences in the budgets and prepares a joint budget proposal.

The proposal from this conference committee is voted on by the House and Senate and becomes the General Appropriations Act. The Act is signed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, and is presented to the Governor. The Governor then approves the budget, vetoes the budget, or approves the budget but vetoes specific appropriations, which are known as a "line item vetoes."

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

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CONVERTING AN IDEA TO A LAW

A bill starts with a legislator, individual or a group of concerned citizens suggesting legislation. Often citizens and local governments will address state legislators regarding their ideas at Legislative Delegation Meetings which are held at local venues and are an excellent opportunity for citizens to be heard on matters which are important to them.

House members may submit six bills each, while Senators can file an unlimited number. Once a bill is filed, it is referred to one or more committees related to the bill's subject. Once the bill reaches a committee it is studied by members to determine if it should be amended, passed or failed. If the bill is passed in committee, it moves to the next committee of reference where the process is repeated. If the bill passes through all assigned committees it moves to the House or Senate floor for debate and a vote.

Once a consensus is reached and the bill is approved by both the House and Senate, the bill is presented to the Governor.



2010 CENSUS

State Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, recently offered his thanks and praise to the many individuals and organizations who partnered in the 2010 Sunshine Census for the State of Florida. Due to their efforts to accurately count the state's population increase, Florida was able to secure two additional Congressional seats.

Representative Weatherford credited this success to the collective efforts of Complete Count Committee delegates Speaker Dean Cannon, Representative Hazelle Rogers and Representative Perry Thurston; the Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research; and the House's outreach through MyFlorida-Census.

REDISTRICTING

The Florida Legislature will use the 2010 Census data to begin the process of drawing new Congressional and Legislative districts. In late 2009, at the direction of then-Speaker-Designate Cannon, House staff began planning to implement a web-based district builder, via cloud server technology.

During the summer and fall of 2011 the Florida House will conduct meetings around the state to take public testimony regarding redistricting. Members of the public will be able to submit partial or complete redistricting plans to the House Redistricting Committee via MyDistrictBuilder. Open public testing of the "beta" version of MyDistrictBuilder will begin in early March.

You can follow the redistricting process and the development of MyDistrictBuilder on Facebook (MyDistrictBuilder), & Twitter (@MyDistrictBuilder), or send a request to be included on the email list via mydistrictbuilder@myfloridahouse.gov.

TIMELINE

- **January 1, 2011:** President reports to Congress the apportionment of 435 US House seats amongst the States.
- **April 1, 2011:** US Census Bureau must provide Florida with its finalized 2010 Census data.
- **July through October 2011:** Florida House and Florida Senate will hold public meetings around Florida to take citizen testimony.
- **January 10, 2012:** The 2012 Regular Session will begin early. The 60 day session would end March 9, 2012.
- **March through June 2012:** FL Supreme Court and US Department of Justice will review Florida's redistricting plans for compliance.
- **June 18-22, 2012:** Qualifying Week for State and Federal elections in Florida. During a Reapportionment Election year, the usually distinct qualifying weeks are held concurrently.