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Florida House of Representatives

THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

Volume 3, Issue 2

February 2011

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Florida's Old and New Capitols

This week in Tallahassee all of the committees are being presented with Governor Rick Scott's budget proposal for the 2011 Legislative Session. You can review the Governor's Policy and Budget recommendations by clicking the logo on page 2 of this issue. Governor Scott's budget proposal reflects our common goal of overcoming the \$4.6 billion budget shortfall by cutting spending and not raising taxes on Floridians.

It is important that the legislature continue to work collectively to find solutions that are in line with our priorities to keep taxes low and encourage private sector economic activity. I look forward to reviewing the Governor's budget proposal in the coming weeks as we work to address the difficult legislative decisions before us and get Florida's economy back on track.

Debbie Mayfield

SELECT COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION SPEAKER DEAN CANNON

The 2011 Legislative Session is an opportunity for transformational change. We should thoughtfully and systematically pursue true reform and avoid the temptation to make changes simply for the sake of change.

Privatization, performance standards, running government like a business, and information technology are appealing ideas but not panaceas. Reform cannot consist of simply combining, recombining, dividing, or redividing government agencies. Our goal instead is to engage in the work of identifying the specific and necessary work of government in order to eliminate the extraneous tasks that have been added over the years. Florida government should be focused on core goals and structured to achieve those goals.

To convey the importance of this select committee's mission, I have asked Speaker pro tempore John Legg to serve as the chairman and Rules & Calendar Chairman Gary Aubuchon to serve as the vice chairman. Speaker pro tempore Legg and Chairman Aubuchon are both well known for their work ethic, seriousness of purpose, and skill in handling complex public policy.

The Select Committee on Government Reorganization's initial charge will be twofold: first, to look at government programs that purport to promote or regulate private sector economic activity; and second, to look at government programs involved with health and human service delivery systems. As time permits, the select committee may also pursue government reorganization initiatives in other areas. The select committee is also encouraged to look beyond statutory changes and consider possible ballot initiatives. More than a decade after the last Cabinet reorganization, now is an opportune time to examine whether the centralization of authority associated with those constitutional changes has produced the expected or desired outcomes.



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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UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM



This week, a proposed committee bill (PCB) on unemployment compensation was noticed by the Economic Development & Tourism Subcommittee. The purpose of this bill is to put individuals in the current system on a path towards re-employment and incorporates much needed reforms. These reforms include strengthening workforce development by providing initial skills testing; reforming the system by preventing abuses in the unemployment compensation program and creating a more flexible system by tying maximum number of benefit weeks to the current unemployment rate.

Additionally, this legislation reduces the tax rates for most employers by revising their benefit ratio calculation downward by 10%. It also assists businesses by continuing the installment payment option for the next three years.

Lastly, the bill codifies federally funded extended benefits into law and provides the unemployed with an initial skills assessment and allows claimants to appeal claim determinations in a nearby appellate court. This legislation seeks to bring consistency and fairness to the unemployment compensation system by providing tax relief to businesses, adjusting benefits to reality, and clarifying workplace expectations for employers and employees.



FLORIDA RETIREMENT SYSTEM & PENSION REFORM

Reforming the Florida Retirement System (FRS) will be a major focus of the Legislature during the upcoming Session. As Vice Chair of the Government Operations Subcommittee, Rep. Mayfield is working with Chairman Jimmy Patronis on many of the issues related to potential reforms.

Last session, HB 1319 started an important dialogue between Legislators and FRS stakeholders that has continued over the past year. Legislators have met with state and local groups, including firefighters, police officers, and government employees, to listen to suggestions on how the system can be reformed fairly while ensuring the system's sustainability over the long term.

The Legislature is committed to making every attempt to protect existing promises that have been made to vested government employees. However, to continue making promises that Floridians cannot afford to future employees would be irresponsible. Government employee retirement and healthcare benefits have grown significantly in recent years, while private sector benefits have declined dramatically.

The Legislature, along with stakeholders, must be willing to make the tough decisions in order to maintain the solvency of Florida's pension system for future generations of retirees and taxpayers.