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Florida House of Representatives

# THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

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Florida's Old and New Capitols

*This past week saw the opening of the 113th Regular Session of the Florida House of Representatives. Our state is facing a broad-ranging and increasingly difficult set of economic challenges, but two goals are at the top of my legislative agenda this Session - keeping taxes low and encouraging private sector economic activity.*

*I will send this newsletter out weekly throughout session to give you an update on issues I feel are important to our district.*

*Debbie Mayfield*



During the first week of session I was pleased to welcome Liberty Magnet School 5th Grade students to the Capitol for their annual field trip. Principal Dale Klaus, who is retiring at the end of this year, was presented with a Certificate of Recognition for his dedication and service to our community. During his tenure as school principal, Liberty Magnet students have received “hands-on” civic lessons at the Florida Capitol for 9 years. Principal Klaus has traveled to Tallahassee with different schools for over 20 years.

## BUILD YOUR OWN BUDGET

During the month of February, Speaker Dean Cannon asked Appropriation Subcommittee members to participate in a budget balancing exercise with the goal of reducing our state budget by a targeted 15 percent in response to a projected \$4.6 billion shortfall in the coming fiscal year. This exercise enjoyed bi-partisan support, provided valuable feedback and helped illuminate for many Members the complexity and the significance of the funding decisions House Members must make.

**BUILD YOUR OWN BUDGET**

The Office of Public Information is proud to announce that Speaker Cannon has invited all Floridians to participate in this important exercise. I would encourage you to click the logo above or visit the Florida House of Representatives homepage and click on the logo called [“Build Your Own Budget.”](#)

Through the Build Your Own Budget page, the *public is invited* to engage in the exact same exercise as House Members using the same Subcommittee budget spreadsheets Members reviewed just weeks ago. I encourage you to try your hand at balancing Florida’s budget and to share the results with my office.



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## IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACT

A proposed committee bill was reported favorably by the House Judiciary Committee during the first week of session. This legislation creates the *Florida Immigration Enforcement Act* to give law enforcement officers the tools necessary to enforce the immigration laws of the United States. Additionally, by requiring the use of the E-Verify system for employment eligibility verification, this bill helps Florida businesses further protect the jobs of legal U.S. residents.

The legislation also provides for the following:

- Prohibits state and local government from limiting the enforcement of federal immigration laws or restricting the sharing of citizenship information with other state agencies or political subdivisions.
- Allows law enforcement officers to check immigration status of any person who is the subject of a criminal investigation prior to arrest when reasonable suspicion exists that the person is unlawfully present in the United States.
- Provides that upon arrest law enforcement officers **must** verify immigration status when reasonable suspicion exists that the person arrested is an alien and unlawfully present in the United States.
- Requires a court to consider the defendant's legal residency status in the U.S. when determining whether to release a defendant on bail or other conditions.
- Protects civil rights by prohibiting law enforcement officers from using race, color or national origin in the enforcement of the verification requirements.

The bill does not require law enforcement officers to ask individuals for immigration documentation during routine traffic stops. It does, however, give law enforcement officers the tools necessary to enforce the immigration laws of the United States.

I believe we have an obligation to uphold the rule of law in our state. Let me be clear on the issue: legal immigration is part of what built America and has made her great. Illegal immigration threatens our economy and our security. We must insist that the Obama Administration take a more aggressive posture to enforce federal immigration laws. The primary responsibility of the federal government is to ensure that America's borders are protected.

## SUNSHINE WEEK

This weeks marks the launch of "Sunshine Week" a national initiative to promote awareness about government transparency and freedom of information. Last week, the nation's leading government transparency advocate, Sunshine Review, released their list of 2011 Sunny Award winners. This year, Florida received more Sunny Awards than any other state, earning 20 awards. Congratulations to the Indian River School District who received an A+ from Sunshine Review this year.



The Florida Legislature created Transparency Florida to provide the public with unprecedented access to state government spending information by posting Florida's operating budget and associated expenditure records online.

This year under the leadership of Speaker pro tempore John Legg, the Florida House has launched the House Office of Public Information (OPI). This office serves to empower and engage all Floridians in our state's legislative process. The staff of OPI are dedicated to helping you better understand complex legislative issues and provide a glimpse into the lives of legislators as they navigate our state's legislative processes. You can find OPI on the House's homepage at [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov).