



Update on [SB 1148](#)

As reported previously, the AFC lobbying team, with the active involvement of the COP Policy and Advocacy team of Dr. Jim Henningsen (CCF) and President John Grosskopf (NFCC), have been working steadily on resolving the issues in SB 1148 that would adversely affect the continuation of our FCS bachelor's degree programs. The bill as drafted and amended in two Senate committees, including a provision to halt the implementation of any more programs by removing the SBOE authority to approve them. In a separate budget amendment, 10% of funding for state colleges' bachelors programs was also removed.

In a flurry of lobbying activity late last week, and with the able help of former legislator President Joe Pickens (SJRSC), a deal has been struck and agreed to by all college presidents and the Senate that will restore the funding and the SBOE authority to approve FCS bachelor's degree programs. The agreement calls for a one-year moratorium on implementing any new programs through May 2015. During this time, a review of the FCS baccalaureate system to date will be made to assure the 170 plus programs currently offered are not competing with university programs, and are meeting local, regional, and statewide employer and workforce needs.

Senior Management Position Reclassifications

At the request of the Council of Business Affairs (COBA), the AFC has been working on an issue that would give colleges more flexibility to reclassify senior management positions. Several colleges have voiced concerns over the lack of ability to reclassify positions from senior management back to regular class when vacated. This has created issues when a college re-organizes and the college has no senior management slots available. In an effort to address this issue, the AFC has drafted language for a bill amendment. The premise is simply to have some more local flexibility. The language would allow reclassification from senior management to regular class only when a position is vacant. The AFC team met with FRS administrators on Monday, March 24 and they did not object to our approach. Our next step is to try to get the language included in an existing bill for passage.

Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment bills are at varying stages in the legislative process. [SB 850](#) which would require the Florida College System to establish collegiate high schools or lose tuition funds for currently enrolled dual enrollment students has passed its last committee of reference and will go to the Senate Floor soon. Its House companion is still in its first committee of reference. [SB 924](#) which would expand fee exemptions for technology fees for dually enrolled students has not moved from any of its three committees of reference. [HB 981](#) also exempts the technology fee and includes a provision that home

schooled students are not required to pay for instructional materials. This bill also has three committees of reference and is sitting in the House Higher Education and Workforce Committee.

Two bills, [HB 961](#) and [SB 1074](#), that would repeal the requirement for school districts to pay standard tuition for dual enrollment students, are not yet moving through the process.

Nursing

The two nursing education bills that impact Florida College System institutions are [SB 1036](#) and [HB 1059](#). The major impact is that the definition of clinical training now includes “simulation” training and expands the cap on simulation training from 25 percent to 50 percent to accommodate the lack of clinical training sites. These bills, SB 1036 and HB 1059, also expand clinical sites to other states, Washington D.C., and United States possessions and territories. SB 1036 is retained on the special order calendar of the Senate floor for April 3, 2014. HB 1059 has passed two committees and now resides in Education Appropriations.

Two Colleges Get New Names

The Florida House on Thursday overwhelmingly passed [SB 236](#) that would rename Edison State College and Pasco-Hernando Community College, sending the measure to Gov. Rick Scott. House members voted 113-2 to approve the bill, which had earlier passed the Senate. Only Reps. Matt Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach, and John Tobia, R-Melbourne Beach, voted against the measure. Edison, which serves Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades and Hendry counties, is slated to become Florida SouthWestern State College. Its trustees agreed to a name change for the Fort Myers-based school amid the possibility of a trademark-infringement lawsuit from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton, N.J. The New Jersey school trademarked its name about a decade ago. The name of Pasco-Hernando Community College would be tweaked to Pasco-Hernando State College.

Technical Colleges

The House Bill, [CS/CS 7057](#) passed the House unanimously on March 27th, and will be sent to the Senate for action. The Senate bill, [SB 1202](#), by Senator Montford, had its first hearing in the Senate Education Committee. The Committee took up an amendment that conformed the bill with the House Bill, and passed as a Committee Substitute. The Senate Bill will be heard next in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.

Residency for Tuition Purposes

The House Bill, [CS/CS/CS HB 851](#) passed the House on March 20, and was sent over to the Senate on March 26, where it was referred to several committees. The Senate Bill, [CS/SB 1400](#) is in its second committee of reference, the Judiciary Committee. The bill is on the agenda for April 1, at 9:00, and could face a tough audience.

Access To Public Records

The House Government Operations Subcommittee will take up a proposal [HB 1151](#) that would help make it easier to get access to public records. Among other things, it would make clear that records requests do not have to be made in writing, unless there is a specific reason in state law requiring a written request. Also, it would limit fees that agencies can charge for staff time needed to comply with records requests.

Highway Speed Limits Could Go Up

A measure that could raise the speed limits by 5 mph on Florida roads zipped through its final Senate stop on Thursday. With a 15-4 vote, the panel approved the measure, [SB 392](#), directs the state Department of Transportation to determine the safe minimum and maximum speed limits on all divided highways that have at least four lanes.

Supporters of the bill say many drivers are already going faster than the current top rate of 70 mph. But critics say increasing speeds could lead to more accidents. The bill could eventually allow state transportation officials to increase speed limits on Florida's "limited access highways" to 75 mph and raise the maximum posted limits on divided four-lane highways in sparsely populated rural areas from 65 mph to 70 mph. The transportation department could hike speeds to 60 mph on other roads they deem safe. And the department would also have the authority to set minimum speeds on certain highways. Florida's highways have had a 70 mph maximum since 1996, the last time the speed limit was reviewed.

In other states, higher speed limits have resulted in more deaths from speeding accidents because drivers' reaction times are reduced and the severity of injuries is intensified, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

School Vouchers

The state's de facto voucher system passed a House subcommittee on a party-line vote Friday, setting up a potential showdown with the Senate over school choice legislation. The House Education Appropriations Subcommittee voted 8-4 to introduce the measure, PCB EDAS 14-03, which would bind together a program aimed at students with disabilities and the voucher expansion. Senate leaders last week pulled their counterpart to the House voucher bill, but the measure for students with disabilities remains alive.

The House move injected legislative brinksmanship to the debate about one of House Speaker Will Weatherford's top priorities. Bills establishing a "Personal Learning Scholarship Account Program," which would reimburse parents for some educational services for children with disabilities, have been moving on both sides of the Capitol. The Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee is set to hear its version of the personal learning accounts bill [SB 1512](#) on Wednesday.

The Florida Education Association, the state's largest teachers union, ripped the move to combine the two measures during comments at the subcommittee meeting Friday. "While we have concerns about the personal learning accounts for children with disabilities, I have to say, as a teacher who taught disabled students daily, that this attempt to salvage the expansion of the ... voucher program by attaching it to this bill is disingenuous to the public and those of us who have dedicated our lives to serving disabled students," said FEA Vice President Joanne McCall.

The bill drops one of the most controversial elements of the original voucher measure, which would have allowed retailers to funnel some of their sales-tax collections into the program. The system is now funded largely by donations from corporations, which then get credit against corporate-income taxes, insurance-premium taxes and similar charges. The legislation would still increase a cap on the program's fundraising by \$30 million beyond the increase currently allowed in law for the next five years.

The value of each voucher would increase, and middle-class families would qualify for partial scholarships. For example, a family of four earning up to \$62,010 a year would be eligible for at least a partial scholarship, a nearly \$20,000 boost from the current \$43,568 annual income limit.

On Friday, Democrats argued that the overhaul fundamentally changes the nature of the program. "The core mission was to provide these corporate tax scholarships for low-income families," said Rep. Dwayne Taylor of Daytona Beach, the subcommittee's top Democrat. "It's now deviated from that to families who are able to pay for their private educations." The reach of the House Bill has allowed Democrats to overcome their traditional divisions on the voucher issue. They voted this week to take a caucus position against the bill, largely binding members to oppose the expansion.

Rep. Mark Pafford, a West Palm Beach Democrat who will lead the caucus after the 2014 elections, and two other prominent House Democrats sat in on the meeting Friday despite not being on the subcommittee. Fresen lashed out at those opposing the bill, saying public money is sent to private organizations for preschool and higher education.

"But somehow, God forbid a public dollar in the K-12 system be utilized by a parent's choice to educate a child that has a specific need or a specific condition or just a specific desire to be outside of the system that was prescribed to it by the public," he said.

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