



Palm Beach State College Chooses First Female President (from the Sun-Sentinel)



After a six-month national search, the Palm Beach State College District Board of Trustees has unanimously chosen Ava L. Parker as the college's fifth president, making her the first woman to hold the position. Parker is expected to start by July 1 and will succeed Dennis Gallon, who is retiring June 30 after 18 years as president. "The quality of the programs and the commitment of the academic and administrative teams are apparent in the success of this institution," Parker said in a news release. "We will do great things together."

A third-generation Floridian, Parker earned her Juris Doctor degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from the University of Florida. She joined Florida Polytechnic University in 2012 and currently serves as the university's executive vice president and chief operating officer. Parker also served on the Board of Governors of the State University System for 10 years, and she is a partner with the Jacksonville-based law firm Lawrence & Parker.

Carolyn L. Williams, trustee and co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee, said interest in the position was intense, with 161 applications received from throughout the United States and abroad. The 15-member committee narrowed the pool to four finalists, including Parker. "Our goal was to identify that individual whose experience and qualifications most closely met the needs of the College and the communities it serves," Williams said in a news release. "We believe that Dr. Parker's background, skills and passion for student success make her uniquely qualified to lead the College, and we are looking forward to working with her."

The State of Florida's Budget and the LIP Funds

Here's a simple overview of the LIP Funds issue with regard to the state budget. Since 2006, Florida has benefitted from federal funds (Low Income Pool - "LIP") which run through the state budget and have been distributed to hospitals to offset services for uncompensated care of the poor and uninsured.

Despite being on notice for a or more year that LIP funds may not be renewed for the 2015-2016 budget year, the Governor and Florida Senate have planned for these funds in their respective budget plans but the House did not, choosing to hold out on the funds until the federal government makes a final decision. The result is about a \$4 billion difference between their spending plans. In addition to assuming that LIP funds would be forthcoming, the Senate also included a form of Medicaid expansion in its budget proposal.

The federal government has now determined that LIP and Medicaid expansion are linked, thus holding LIP funds contingent on Medicaid until some form of expansion prevails. Then they will come forward on the possibility and amount of LIP funds for Florida. As a result, the House and Senate are currently at an impasse making it likely that a state budget will not be crafted by May 1, the final day of regular Legislative Session. An extended session will be required since a budget must be passed by June 30.

[SB 948](#) regarding FCS Baccalaureate Degrees (formerly SB 1252)

Issues reported throughout this legislative session regarding our colleges' ability to deliver bachelor's degree programs have been a dominant factor in the collective lobbying efforts of the AFC and the Council of Presidents. The primary goal, of course, has been to assure the degree approval process moratorium that has been in effect since last year, and is scheduled to "sunset" on May 31, in fact, actually does sunset.

Last week, the Council of Presidents agreed to some general principles for moving forward in negotiating with Sen. Joe Negron, the primary architect of the proposed "reforms" to the colleges' baccalaureate programs. SB 1252 has now been amended into SB 948. Among the issues agreed to in principle between the Senator and the COP are:

- No college will have to change its name.
- The Florida College System will be renamed the Florida Community College System.
- Colleges with 10 percent or more of total enrollment in bachelor's programs (based on 2014-15 FTE 3 report) may grow up to five percent. Those colleges below 10 percent may grow an additional seven percent. These caps will sunset on June 30, 2018. Colleges will have no cap on the growth of their bachelor's program enrollment after that time.
- Notice of Intent to the Department of Education to start a new bachelor's degree is extended from 100 days to 120 days. The State University System and Independent Colleges and Universities will have 90 days to review proposals.
- Colleges will be required to have one, third-party review of the need for a new bachelor's program. (needs clarification in current bill draft)
- Moves the description of college baccalaureate programs to a section of law that covers secondary roles for the colleges. This is where the baccalaureate authorization was originally located when enacted years ago.

Florida Senate stalls school guns bills (from the Bradenton Herald)

A proposal that would allow certain teachers to pack heat in public schools is on life support after the Senate Education Committee declined to vote on it for the second meeting in a row. The measure ([SB 180](#)) could still come up as an amendment to a related bill. But Senate Education Committee Chairman John Legg, R-Trinity, has been adamantly against it, and he said he was hopeful that the full Senate would side with him if the measure found its way to the floor. "I've talked to several members, and they agree that it's not the Senate process to go around us at this point," he said. A companion bill, sponsored by Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, is awaiting a vote by the full House. The bill, which would allow school employees with law enforcement or military experience to carry concealed weapons on school property, has been under consideration for the past three legislative sessions.

This year's other controversial bill involving guns and schools — a proposal to allow concealed weapons on college campuses — also has stalled in the Senate. The so-called campus carry bill ([HB 4005/SB 176](#)) won the approval of two Senate committees earlier in the session. But Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, R-Miami, did not schedule the bill for a hearing on Wednesday, and legislative committees are no longer meeting. "I decided to holster it after polling the members of the Senate," Diaz de la Portilla said. "There wasn't support for it." Diaz de la Portilla is among the opponents.

"I really don't think it is a good idea for a 21-year-old at a frat keg party to be packing heat," he said, "and I'm both an NRA member and a concealed-carry permit holder." The language could still wind up on the Senate floor, but under Senate rules it would face a higher bar for approval.

Students, professors and campus police chiefs plan to remain on high alert. On Wednesday, Florida State students Jade Reindl, 20, and Jacob Elpern, 19, delivered 10,000 petitions from students who oppose the measure to Senate President Andy Gardiner. "The students have made it very clear: We don't want this bill to pass," said Reindl, a junior from Niceville. "It's not in the best interest of students. It's not in the best interest of the universities."

Performance Funding to be a Way of Life

[SB 7046](#), which will put higher education performance funding into state law passed its final committee on April 16. The bill will also require universities to offer the "Benaquisto Scholarship" for national merit scholarship awardees.

The bill also extends the requirement to provide an additional hour of daily reading instruction for students enrolled in the 300 lowest performing elementary schools through the 2017-2018 academic year. It expands this to require participating schools to implement a summer program with an equivalent number of hours of instruction in addition to the hour of instruction provided during the school year.

The bill increases the bonuses available for teachers whose course led to a student attaining an industry certification under the Career and Professional Education Act.

BILL UPDATES

RETIREMENT

[HB 1054](#) and [HB 565](#) (similar) regarding Reclassification of Senior Management Positions

These bills co-sponsored by the AFC would allow for the reclassification of vacant senior management positions during a six-month period, once every five years. In the Senate the bill is on the second reading calendar. In the House, the bill is on the calendar for floor action.

PUBLIC RECORDS

[SB 0182](#) and [HB 0223](#) (similar) regarding Postsecondary Education Executive Searches

The proposal would provide an exemption from public records requirements for any personal identifying information, including the name, of an applicant for president, provost, or dean of a state university or Florida College System institution. The bill also provides an exemption from public meeting requirements for any portion of a meeting held for the purpose of identifying or vetting applicants for president, provost, or dean of a state university. The Senate bill was temporarily postponed in the Rules Committee on March 23. The House bill has passed on committees of reference and is on the calendar for floor action.

STATE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

[HB 913](#) and [SB 7024](#) regarding restrictions on investments in Northern Ireland

This legislation supported by AFC would allow for the re-distribution of interest earned and recovered as the investment ban on the State Board of Administration regarding investments in North Ireland due to social unrest years ago would be lifted. The result would be about \$1.2 million being returned to 26 of our

colleges. Both bills have passed all committees of reference and are on the calendar for floor action in their respective chambers.

TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY

SB 938 and HB 1317 and HB 7125 (comparable) regarding textbook affordability

SB 938 reduces costs associated with postsecondary textbooks and tuition and fees, and requires an evaluation of policies to improve college affordability. Additionally, the bill establishes a new sales tax exemption for textbooks required for courses offered by Florida College System institutions, state universities, and independent colleges and universities that are eligible to participate in the William L. Boyd, IV, Florida Resident Access Grant or the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant Program. HB 1317 addresses only the sales tax exemption and has not moved. Unfortunately there has been no action on SB 938 since March 31 when a committee substitute was read in Senate Higher Education. However, HB 7125 contains the textbook sales tax exemptions and has passed the House. The bill is now in messages for the Senate to pick up.

FROM the NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA WIRE..... It was The Week the Legislature Stood Still.

Lawmakers acknowledged this week they almost certainly won't get the budget done on time --- by the scheduled May 1 conclusion of the legislative session --- because of a health-care funding issue that state officials have known about for the past year. A quick round of finger-pointing ensued in an unusual four-way conflict that involved Gov. Rick Scott, the House, the Senate and the federal government, but that did little to solve the problem.

The two main parties to the squabble are the House and the Senate, which stand \$4.2 billion apart, thanks largely to differences in how they handle the Low Income Pool, or LIP, program and the Senate's proposal to use \$2.8 billion in Medicaid expansion funds to help lower-income Floridians purchase private insurance. And as increasingly caustic remarks flew between the two Republican-controlled chambers, it was clear that the Era of Good Feelings (real or imagined) of the last two years was over.

Democrats worked to conceal any glee they might have over those developments by speaking of their disappointment. "Apparently, we've got a train wreck, and those two locomotives are about ready to hit," said House Minority Leader Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach. And as the collision approached, the chambers slogged through schedules that had minimal impact. Dozens of bills were approved by the House, but few drew much attention. Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee endured a daylong meeting Thursday that was notable for how little true controversy was attracted by the legislation on the agenda.

Lawmakers weren't quite adrift, but knowing that they wouldn't complete the one constitutional requirement for the annual legislative session --- and won't have the bargaining power that the budget provides to reach agreement on other legislation --- gave the events an air of going through the motions.

GIVING ME LIP

The discussions surrounding LIP, which provides money to hospitals and other health providers that serve large numbers of poor and uninsured patients, were already tense when a high-ranking official at the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services sent a letter Tuesday that set off a wave of recriminations. The letter suggested that continued funding for LIP, set to expire June 30, was tied to the state's decision on Medicaid expansion. CMS official Vikki Wachino wrote that "the state's expansion status is an important consideration in our approach regarding extending the LIP beyond June. We believe that the future of the LIP, sufficient provider rates, and Medicaid expansion are linked in considering a solution for Florida's low income citizens, safety net providers and taxpayers."

Any remaining comity between the two chambers disappeared. House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, responded to the letter by issuing a statement lambasting the federal government and the Senate. "It is unthinkable that (the federal government) would leave our state on the hook for over a billion dollars simply because they want a specific policy outcome," Crisafulli said. "We believe the Florida Senate has provided inaccurate and false hope to Washington, D.C., and has muddled negotiations. Let me be clear --- the discussions about LIP and Medicaid expansion must be separate."

Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, wrote a memo to senators predicting stark consequences --- including the possibility of closed cancer centers or dialysis units --- if the state didn't get LIP or a health-care expansion done. "The bottom line is: more than ever, today's correspondence from CMS highlights the link between LIP and expansion and the need to consider a comprehensive Florida solution," Gardiner wrote. "Time is of the essence. The Senate remains open to meeting at any time to discuss our free-market approach to expansion or any alternative the House or governor would like to propose."

The next day, the head of the state agency that deals with Medicaid went before the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee for a confirmation hearing. Despite what ended up being an 8-1 vote in her favor, it was not smooth sailing for Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Liz Dudek. Senators were skeptical of the contention that the agency was unaware that LIP funding and Medicaid expansion were tied together until the CMS letter arrived. Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, pointed to media reports that a letter sent to CMS by the state's congressional delegation dated Tuesday --- and asking that LIP and expansion be considered separately --- was largely written on an AHCA computer well before.

"But yet weeks ago, a letter was crafted within the agency, and you asked members of the United States Congress to sign it, and if you didn't have any understanding or prior notice that coverage expansion and LIP were linked, why go to all the trouble of getting a letter and circulating it around Congress?" Gaetz asked. "We had heard --- and there's a lot of information that seems to go around through the grapevine --- that they were considering that there might be a linkage," she said after the meeting. "We wanted to make sure that they would support LIP regardless of what happened with expansion."

Scott's administration responded Thursday by saying the governor would file a lawsuit trying to force the feds to pay up. Scott's lawsuit would rely on a potentially novel interpretation of the 2012 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upheld the federal Affordable Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare. In that case, *NFIB v. Sebelius*, the court ruled that the federal government couldn't coerce states into expanding Medicaid by requiring any state that didn't do so to give up all of its Medicaid funding.

The governor's legal action would argue that the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services are doing the same thing by linking LIP and Medicaid expansion. "Our citizens already pay federal taxes that go into the federal LIP program," Scott said in a statement announcing the action. "Now, President Obama has decided that the state must take on a larger Medicaid program, forcing our taxpayers to pay even more to government, before they get their own federal tax dollars back. This is outrageous, and specifically what the Supreme Court warned against."

Even lawmakers who supported the governor's suit conceded it won't free up the money on time to fix the budget mess. And some questioned the wisdom of the move. "That's the governor's prerogative, that's the job of the executive, but I just don't understand how that would help any negotiations," said Sen. Rene Garcia, a Hialeah Republican who oversees health-care funding. "If you are trying to negotiate a deal on LIP with CMS, I just don't understand why you would sue the federal government in the middle of negotiations."

THE OTHER FEDERAL NEWS

Maybe negotiations with the federal government will go more smoothly if one of the state's favorite sons -- former Gov. Jeb Bush or U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio --- manages to capture the Republican presidential nomination and the White House. This week, Rubio announced what pretty much everyone already knew: He's running. "Before us now is the opportunity to author the greatest chapter yet in the amazing story of

America," Rubio said. "But we can't do that by going back to the leaders and ideas of the past. We must change the decisions we are making by changing the people who are making them." It was a none-too-subtle shot at former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and perhaps Bush, both of whom have been around longer than the 43-year-old Rubio and both of whom share last names with former presidents.

The announcement, which Rubio has said will keep him from seeking a second term in the Senate, set off a frenzy of activity among the state's politicians. The top contender for Rubio's seat, state Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, had taken his name out of the running over the weekend. Congressmen and state lawmakers like Gaetz were among those considering runs for the GOP Senate nomination. Leading Democrats have already begun uniting behind Congressman Patrick Murphy, a moderate, but Congressman Alan Grayson, a liberal firebrand, is looking likely to make a run as well.

GLASS HALF FULL

There was some actual activity on policy around the state Capitol. Scott signed a wide-ranging bill aimed at rolling back the number of tests given to public school students, one of the highest-profile measures of the session, following up on weeks of legislative wrangling and his own campaign promise to review the level of testing in schools. "I agree with many teachers and parents who say we have too many tests, and while this legislation is a great step forward, we will keep working to make sure Florida students are not over tested," Scott said in a statement issued by his office.

The legislation ([HB 7069](#)) puts a hold on the use of student test data for school grades, teacher evaluations and student promotion to fourth grade until the new Florida Standards Assessments can be independently validated. It also scraps a law requiring school districts to come up with end-of-course tests in classes where the state doesn't administer such exams; caps the amount of time students can spend on state and school district tests at 45 hours a year; and reduces the portion of a teacher's evaluation tied to student performance from the current 50 percent to one-third.

The Senate approved a bill that would restore a popular adoption-subsidies program --- while repealing a 38-year-old law that banned gay adoption. The measure ([HB 7013](#)), passed on a 27-11 vote. Its main purpose was to provide cash incentives to state workers who adopt children in Florida's foster-care system, especially children with special needs. But the bill the Senate passed Tuesday also included an unanticipated and controversial provision added by the House last month: a formal end to the gay-adoption ban.

Sen. Tom Lee, a Brandon Republican who voted against the bill, took issue with the House move to add the repeal to the incentives bill. "This is a valid issue," Lee said of the debate about the ban. "It should stand alone," adding that it shouldn't "hijack a piece of legislation that was supposed to be a feel-good moment for this Legislature and divide senators." Gaetz agreed that the term "hijacked" was a fair description. However, he said, "If I thought for one minute that I was imperiling the welfare or the upbringing or the life of any child with anything in this bill, I'd lead the floor fight against it. But there is no evidence anywhere, by anybody, that anything in this bill will do anything other than give children a chance for their dreams to come true."

The dreams of lawmakers, lobbyists and reporters were more modest than those of children. It was a dream of a session that wraps up before June.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Throw Dinah the bone. Please put your paw on the green button."---A flyer being distributed by Lisa Miller, a lobbyist, who is trying to get the Legislature to add animals to a research component included in a Senate medical-marijuana proposal ([SB 7066](#)). Miller believes marijuana could help her dog, Dinah.

DAYS UNTIL Sine Die: 11; Florida's Presidential Primary: 328; Florida's 2016 Primary Election: 497; Florida's 2016 General Election: 568.