



2017 Legislative Session – Week 5

Over the hump and heading toward the home stretch.....

HOUSE BUDGET BILL RELEASED

No new news on the budget proposals. There should be some action in on Wednesday as the Senate Appropriations bill is on Special Order on the calendar.

BILLS TO WATCH

There is not much policy bill action to report. The AFC lobbying team is working steadfastly on the baccalaureate issues, including the approval process and the enrollment caps. We continue to monitor the progress on other issues related to a new state board and performance measures.

[SB 128](#) by Baxley (compare [HB 245](#)) regarding Stand Your Ground

Known as the “Stand Your Ground” bill it will shift a key burden of proof in “stand your ground” self-defense cases from defendants to prosecutors in the pre-trial hearings. It passed the Senate by a 23-15 vote and is currently in “messages” awaiting action in the House. On Tuesday, April 4th, the House will hear HB 245--the Stand Your Ground Expansion proposal. This bill would place the burden on the party wishing to overcome the claim of self-defense, the prosecution. Senate President Joe Negron wants to hold the line and stick with the Senate’s more stringent version of SB 128 which would require prosecutors to prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” before trial, why a criminal defendant cannot claim immunity from prosecution in use-of-force cases. Negron said he, personally, doesn’t want to accept the compromise language the House approved that sets the standard one step lower to “clear and convincing evidence.”

[HB 153](#) by Mariano (similar [SB 1462](#) by Hutson) regarding Excess Hours

The bill would change the trigger for paying an excess hour surcharge from 110% of the number of hours to achieve a BA degree to 120% of the number of hours required to receive a BA degree. Students could have 10% more credit hours before having to pay the excess hours penalty.

[HB 253](#) by Duran ([SB 540](#) by Campbell) regarding Bright Futures Scholarships

Requires a student to perform 30 hours of community service in order to renew eligibility for any level of Bright Futures. Specifically disallows work for a relative or relatives business or work for which the student received academic credit or remuneration. Applies to students with initial eligibility in 2017-18.

[HB 489](#) by Smith (compare to [SB 2](#), [HB 3](#), [HB 155](#), [SB 1464](#), [SB 1296](#)) regarding Bright Futures Scholarships

The Bill revises eligibility requirements for Bright Futures and establishes a declining score scheme over a three year period by reducing the required SAT score to 1280 for 2017-18 from the current 1290. It reduces it to 1275 for 2018-19 and to 1270 for 2019-20. Requires payment of 100% of tuition and fees for the highest award plus \$300 and requires payment of 75% for second tier. Requires the Legislature to fund for the summer.

**LOW INCOME STUDENTS COULD GET MORE AID - By LLOYD DUNKELBERGER
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA (Used with Permission)**

Although state college leaders are unhappy with a Senate budget that would boost university funding but slash support for the colleges, they are pleased with a Senate effort to expand aid for students who come from lower-income families.

The budget plan ([SB 2500](#)), which the Senate will take up Wednesday, would increase the state's largest need-based aid program, known as Florida student assistance grants, by 81 percent, or \$121 million, in the academic year that begins July 1. Senators also want to double the state's matching grants for "first generation" college and university students to a total of \$10.6 million. The increase in need-based aid, which would also help the university system, is important to the 28 state colleges because their students will not benefit much from the Senate's plan to expand the Bright Futures merit-scholarship program. The Senate budget would cover full tuition and fees for the top Bright Futures students, known as "academic scholars," as well as provide \$300 for textbooks for two semesters and cover summer tuition.

But out of 46,000 Bright Futures academic scholars projected in the next academic year, only 5 percent of them will be enrolled at a state college. In contrast, state college students represented 70 percent of the 105,000 students in a public college or university who received a need-based Florida student assistance grant in the 2015-16 academic year, according to the state Department of Education. System-wide, state college students received an average grant of \$903, ranging from \$1,651 at Chipola College to \$499 at Broward College. Broward had the most students receiving grants, with 17,000, followed by Miami Dade College with 16,700.

The Senate budget would expand Florida student assistance grants for public universities and colleges from the current year \$114.6 million to \$208 million. The grants also go for private universities and other post-secondary programs. "We're all over the Senate right now because we're concerned," said David Armstrong, president of Broward College, referring to the Senate's proposed budget cuts, including a \$55 million reduction in remedial education funding for the colleges.

But it's a different story with the Senate's plan to expand need-based aid. "We have been neglecting the need-based (programs)," said Armstrong, who oversees the second-largest state college in the