



The 2007 Session, held from March 6 - May 4, was marked by a spirit of bipartisanship. Republicans and Democrats worked together to tackle a number of important issues dealing with: public safety, smart energy policies, the environment, education, and elections. Below you will find more information about each of these issues, as well as a description of a few of the bills I sponsored this session. We returned to Tallahassee in June for a special session focused on creating a long-term, thoughtful solution for property tax reform. More information is in a separate handout. Contact information is below so that you can inform me of your concerns and ideas. Citizen involvement is the cornerstone of good policy making. ~ Paula Dockery, State Senator

Keeping Floridians Safe

Public safety legislation we passed this year will help ensure that Florida's families can continue to enjoy our state in safety. I sponsored the **Anti-Murder Act, SB 146**, which was the first bill to pass both the House and Senate and be signed into law during the 2007 Legislative Session. It ensures that offenders who are flagged as Violent Felony Offenders of Special Concern (with qualifying offenses such as kidnapping, murder, and sexual battery) will be jailed if their probation is violated. They will then be held without bail until a judge determines whether they are a danger to the community. This bill will reduce murders and other violent crimes in Florida, and will make Floridians safer by keeping violent criminals away from our families and loved ones. We have already seen the first arrest under the Anti-Murder Act - a sexual predator on probation in Jacksonville was arrested for committing a violent felony offense.

We also passed the **Cyber Crimes Against Children Act**, which requires sex offenders to register their email addresses or instant message names. It also allows the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to provide those addresses to social networking websites so site operators can monitor or block them. We also expanded the team within the Department of Legal Affairs that investigates and prosecutes Internet crimes against children, bringing it to 50 positions and providing nearly \$4 million to the unit. The Cyber Crimes Act increased penalties for possessing child pornography, traveling to meet a minor for sexual purposes, and for sexual offenders who misrepresent their age online.

Ensuring Fair Elections

The Senate passed a comprehensive elections package requiring that paper ballots be used in every voting precinct in Florida by the November 2008 elections. These ballots will create a verifiable paper trail. The package also contained a provision calling for a January 29 Florida presidential primary. This primary date will give Florida — the fourth most populous state in the U.S. and the world's 16th largest economy — an influential role in presidential elections. Every Florida voter deserves a vote in elections, and the State of Florida deserves a voice in choosing our nation's leaders. Many of the components in **SB 1174**, which I filed, were included in this legislation.

Giving Students a Quality Education

Early in the Session, the Senate passed a performance pay plan that gives teachers incentives to achieve, while giving local school districts the freedom to determine how best to reward their teachers. Under this program, every teacher in Florida - regardless of what grade they teach, the learning level of their students, or the subject matter - will be eligible for a bonus. Criteria for rewarding teachers will not be limited to the results of one test; it will be comprehensive.

Smart Energy Policy

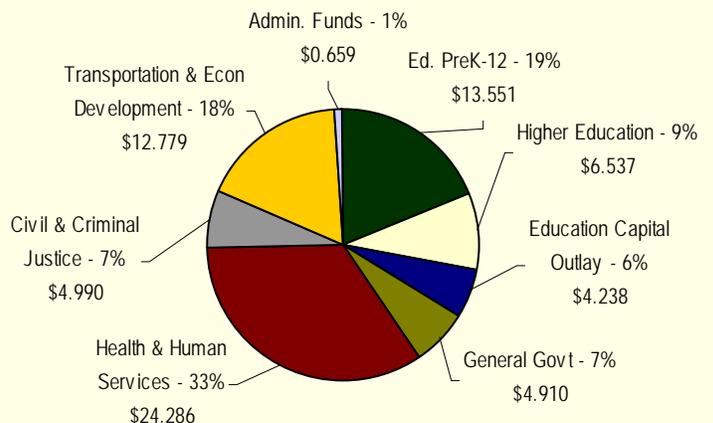
Climate change, high gas prices, and dangers to the environment have recently dominated the headlines. Finding efficient, safe energy policies is the smart thing to do, and conservation is the responsible thing to do. This year I filed **SB 1640** to increase our focus on the use of solar energy. The ideas contained in my bill were rolled up into the comprehensive energy package, **HB 7123/SB 996**, which creates tax exemptions for energy efficient products and biofuels, and rebates on solar energy systems. The package's farm-to-fuel grants program provides renewable energy matching grants. While Governor Crist felt this was good legislation, he decided to veto the bill because it did not go far enough. We will continue to work on legislation for next session to make the State of Florida's conservation efforts a model for others to follow.

Budget

Florida's economy this year is experiencing a cooling period. For the first time in decades, current revenue is lower than that of the previous year. While this adds to the challenge of crafting the budget, it is also a tremendous opportunity to evaluate, prioritize, and to invest Florida's resources wisely. The Senate carefully considered where to best target every dollar in an effort to build Florida's future by making wise investments today. Highlights include:

- \$22.5 billion for education (4.9% increase over current year funding)
- \$24.3 billion for health care, including KidCare funding for 31,000 new kids
- \$200 million in cash and bonds for Everglades restoration
- \$4.9 billion for public safety
- \$23.9 million for economic incentive programs

2007-2008 State of Florida Budget
\$71.9 Billion (amounts in billions)



Budget Items for District 15

Polk

Nursing Education at Florida Southern College - \$500,000
Colt Creek State Park - \$3 million
Davenport Wastewater Program, Phase III - \$250,000
Polk City Wastewater Treatment System - \$1.25 million
Lakeland Urban Lake Restoration Initiative - \$500,000
USF Lakeland Campus - \$10 million
Pace Road Interchange (USF Lkld Campus)- \$23.3 million

Lake

Lake County Emergency Operations Center - \$1 million
Minneola Wastewater Reclamation & Recharge - \$200,000

Hernando

Brooksville Water System Improvement - \$250,000
Enrichment Center Special Needs Disaster Shelter - \$600,000

Osceola

Emergency Operations Center Technology - \$500,000
Central Fla Regional Transp Auth Transfer Station - \$400,000
Kissimmee Marydia Park - \$200,000

Sumter

Bushnell Wastewater Collection System - \$300,000
Historic Courthouse Renovation - \$500,000
FRDAP Grants - \$450,000

Highlights of Senator Dockery's Bills

SB 184 - Strangulation (*PASSED*)

Strangulation is often an impulsive act used in domestic violence attacks, usually intended to silence a victim or render the victim unconscious for further assault. Medical research indicates that although the brain can survive for up to five minutes without oxygen, brain cells begin to die after 60 seconds. This bill creates a new felony battery category, domestic battery by strangulation, which increases the penalty for intentional strangulation and suffocation (currently a misdemeanor). Strangulation is a violent crime, one which far too often kills the victim, and this change will hold offenders accountable for the severity of their crimes. Currently, strangulation is in the same category as offenses such as punching, slapping, or kicking, none of which are seen as lethal actions.

SB 2520 - Mentally III

This bill creates the Behavioral Health Community Solutions Pilot Program in the 10th Judicial Circuit to identify gaps in service in relation to behavioral health problems in the criminal justice system. The pilot project is a cooperative effort between the Sheriff's Offices in Polk, Highlands, and Hardee County, and the Peace River Center. Its purpose is to divert people from the community jails and criminal justice system who would benefit from other available community services and treatments. (*While this legislation did not pass, a statewide grant program was created through another bill, which will be used for similar programs across the state.*)

SB 1160 - University Building Designations (*PASSED*)

Current law requires Legislative approval before naming a state building or other facility for a living person. This legislation provides for the naming of buildings and facilities at UF, UCF, and USF, as well as other state buildings. This bill was originally filed to name the following buildings at the University of Florida:

Mark Bostick Golf Course
Katie Seashole Pressly Softball Stadium
Bispham Turfgrass Support Building - IFAS
Gale Lemerand Football Support Facility

Committee Assignments:

Law & Justice Policy & Calendar Committee, Chair
Military Affairs & Domestic Security, Chair
Environmental Preservation
Health Policy
Transportation
Education PreK-12 Appropriations
Rules
Public Service Commission Oversight

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SB 680 - High Growth District Capital Outlay Grants

The High Growth District Capital Outlay Assistance Grant Program is intended to assist counties that have recently experienced excessive student growth and are in desperate need for additional educational facilities. These counties have exhausted their local tools for raising the necessary funds. (*This legislation died during the last hour of session in the House*)

SB 2014 - DOT Work Programs

This legislation addresses amendments to the Department of Transportation's 5-year Work Plan. If a project is being deleted or delayed in the first three years, AND has the effect of deleting or delaying programmed improvements in traffic-carrying capacity, then DOT would be required to notify each local government and MPO that is affected by the amendment, using certified mail or return receipt requested email. This change would ensure greater communication between DOT and the impacted local governments and MPOs. (*This legislation did not pass, but the new DOT Secretary is committed to improving communication.*)

HB 777 - Polk Transit Authority (*PASSED*)

This Local Bill creates the Polk Transit Authority to plan, manage, operate, and maintain a public transit system across Polk County. It is the intent of the county and existing transit operations within the county to combine into a single entity.

HB 1095 - Toho Water Authority (*PASSED*)

This Local Bill allows Polk County to join the Toho Water Authority in Osceola County in order to provide services to the Poinciana area in both Polk/Osceola counties.

Committee Bills that Passed:

SB 2052 - Solid Waste
SB 886 - Building Plans/Public Records
SB 1448 - Service Members/Dependents

