



Palm Beach County State Legislative Update

Department of Legislative Affairs

Committee Week 6

December 4-8, 2023

Florida's upcoming legislative session is just around the corner. House and Senate committees and subcommittees met this week to consider legislation and receive information on a variety of topics. In addition to committee business, Governor Ron DeSantis released his proposed budget for Fiscal Year 24-25 this week, and Senate President Kathleen Passidomo announced her top legislative priority for this session, addressing Florida's critical health care workforce shortages.

The 'Focus on Florida's Future' Budget

State law requires Florida's Governor to submit a proposed budget to the Legislature thirty days prior to the beginning of legislative session. This week Governor Ron DeSantis released his proposed state budget for FY 24-25. Referred to as the "Focus on Florida's Future Budget," the proposal totals \$114.4 billion, more than \$4.6 billion lower than the current fiscal year's funding plan.

The Governor's budget would bring Florida's total reserves to \$16.3 billion and eliminate more than 1,000 government positions. To further Florida's efforts to pay down debt, the budget allocates an additional \$455 million to the Debt Reduction Program established last year. The proposal also recommends more than \$1.1 billion in tax relief, a three percent increase in benefits for FRS pension retirees, and an increase in the employer contribution for employee FRS Investment accounts by an additional one percent of the member's salary.

In addition to elevated funding appropriated during special session to address the rise of anti-Semitic threats and safety concerns for Florida's Jewish communities, the "Focus on Florida's Future Budget" includes \$10 million to enhance safety measures at all Florida Jewish Day Schools. It also appropriates funding for the Florida Holocaust Museum and the Florida Holocaust Task Force.

A total of \$1.1 billion is recommended for Everglades restoration including \$550 million for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and \$64 million for the EAA reservoir. Statewide resilience projects, resilience planning, and coral reef protection is appropriated \$157 million total.

The Florida Department of Transportation's Work Program is recommended to receive \$14.5 billion to support Florida's growth and \$630 million is proposed for the Moving Florida Forward Initiative to relieve traffic congestion.

With regard to housing, Governor DeSantis recommended funding the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program at \$89.5 million, the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program at \$208.6 million, and the Hometown Heroes Housing program at \$100 million.

Other items in the budget include \$100 million for the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund, \$107 million for the My Safe Florida Home Grant Program, and \$5 million to continue the Illegal Alien Transport Program.

Senate Unveils ‘Live Healthy’ Initiative

Senate President Passidomo announced her newest legislative priority called “Live Healthy” which includes almost \$1 billion in state funds to address the shortage of health care providers in Florida. The initiative is comprised of two bills which will be heard in committee next week.

The first bill, led by Senator Colleen Burton (R-Lakeland), would allocate \$796.7 million for health care workforce training and deregulation to increase employment mobility. The second bill, led by Senator Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart), would appropriate \$76.25 million for loans for technological innovation. The measures cover various regulations, health care pricing transparency, and forgivable loans for volunteer health services. The proposals aim to expand medical residency slots, increase Medicaid reimbursement rates, and allocate over \$150 million for hospitals supporting maternal care. The legislation also raises the eligibility threshold for free clinics that local health departments often run from 200% to 300% of the federal poverty level, which is about \$90,000 for a family of four. The measures include the creation of a 15-member Health Care Innovation Council and a \$75 million annual revolving loan fund for technological advancements in health care. Both bills will be considered during the Senate Health Policy Committee on Tuesday, December 11.

In Committee

SB 334, Rabies Vaccinations

The Senate Committee on Agriculture unanimously passed SB 344 this week. The bill authorizes employees or agents of an animal control authority to administer rabies vaccinations to impounded dogs, cats, and ferrets under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian. The veterinarian must be available for consultation in person or via telecommunication. The bill has two more committees of reference before it can be heard on the Senate floor. The House companion measure, HB 303, is scheduled to be heard in its first committee on December 13.

SB 196, Regional Rural Development Grants Program

The Senate Commerce & Tourism Committee approved SB 196 which would delete the match requirement for regional rural development grants. This change will make it easier for rural communities and rural areas of opportunity to access the critical funding necessary to build the professional capacity of regionally based economic development organizations. The bill has two more committee stops before the Senate floor.

HB 73, Supported Decisionmaking Authority

The House Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee considered and unanimously passed HB 73 this week. Under current law, people with developmental disabilities typically have a guardian advocate to help them make important life decisions. At times, these arrangements can come at a high cost to the rights of individuals who have the capacity to make these decisions with support. Supported decisionmaking authority (SDM) is a person-driven decisionmaking

model that empowers a person with a disability to make life choices with help from a supporter, while the values, priorities, and wishes of the decisionmaker drive the process. The supporter identified in the SDM agreement helps the person with a disability understand and explore options, to know risks and benefits associated with options, to receive recommendations, and to independently exercise his or her rights with appropriate assistance based on his or her unique needs and abilities. The SDM agreement model does not provide the designated agent or supporter the authority to bind or act on behalf of the adult with a disability on any subject matter.

This bipartisan measure would create supportive decisionmaking authority as a type of power of attorney. The bill also requires the circuit court to consider the specific needs and abilities of a person with developmental disabilities when determining whether to approve a request for a guardian advocate. When a guardian advocate court order is issued, the order must address why other alternatives were not sufficient and why the SDM option was not appropriate for the situation. This legislation provides an alternative to guardianship, allowing capable individuals the support they need to make key life decisions driven by and for themselves. The bill has two committees left to pass through before it is eligible to be heard on the House floor.

HB 103, Public Records/County & City Attorneys

In recent years, many cities and counties have observed an increase in the frequency and severity of threats directed toward their administrators and attorneys. HB 103 unanimously passed the House Civil Justice Subcommittee this week and would exempt the personal identifying and location information of current county and assistant county attorneys from public record. The bill extends these exemptions to current city and assistant city attorneys as well. The bill has two more committees of reference left to pass through before consideration by the full chamber.

SB 28 & HB 107, Electric Vehicle & Hybrid Vehicle License Fees

Annual fuel tax revenues at both the state and federal levels are directly based on the number of gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel consumed. Because some electric vehicles (EVs) are not powered by gasoline or diesel, and others use less gasoline or diesel fuel than a conventional vehicle with only an internal combustion engine, an increase in the number of EVs operating on the roadways results in less revenue being raised from fuel taxes for comparable vehicle miles traveled. Traditional funding for repairs and improvements to the nation's highways comes primarily from state and federal taxes collected at the pump. Many argue that EV owners may not be fairly contributing to the cost of constructing and maintaining public roads as a result of consuming less fuel and, therefore paying less in fuel taxes.

SB 28 and HB 107 impose taxes on electric and hybrid vehicles in addition to the registration fees currently assessed against non-electric vehicles and authorize biennial registration of such vehicles. The bills provide for the distribution of the proceeds of such fees to the State Transportation Trust Fund and to the county where such a vehicle is registered. The bills restrict local government use of the transferred proceeds to transportation expenditures only. SB 28 was considered and passed in its first committee of reference, Senate Transportation. HB 107 was heard in the House Transportation & Modals Subcommittee where it was significantly amended, procedurally requiring it to be temporarily postponed and brought back for a final vote at a future meeting.

House Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee

The House Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee heard presentations on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from Florida State University and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Legislators received an overview of these chemicals and what their impacts are on humans and the environment. FDEP reviewed a timeline of recent federal and state regulatory actions with lawmakers and indicated they will continue to conduct site assessments and monitor forthcoming federal legislation and rulemaking regarding PFAS.

House Agriculture, Conservation & Resiliency Subcommittee

The House Agriculture, Conservation & Resiliency Subcommittee received presentations from the University of South Florida's College of Marine Sciences and the American Flood Coalition on issues related to resilience planning. USF's presentation focused heavily on the data around Florida's multiple potential sea level rise scenarios. The American Flood Coalition shared their 2024 Florida policy priorities which include enabling better quality projects, supporting highly impacted communities by expanding eligibility criteria for financially distressed communities, and ensuring high quality data by providing DEP the authority to set sea level rise projections every five years.

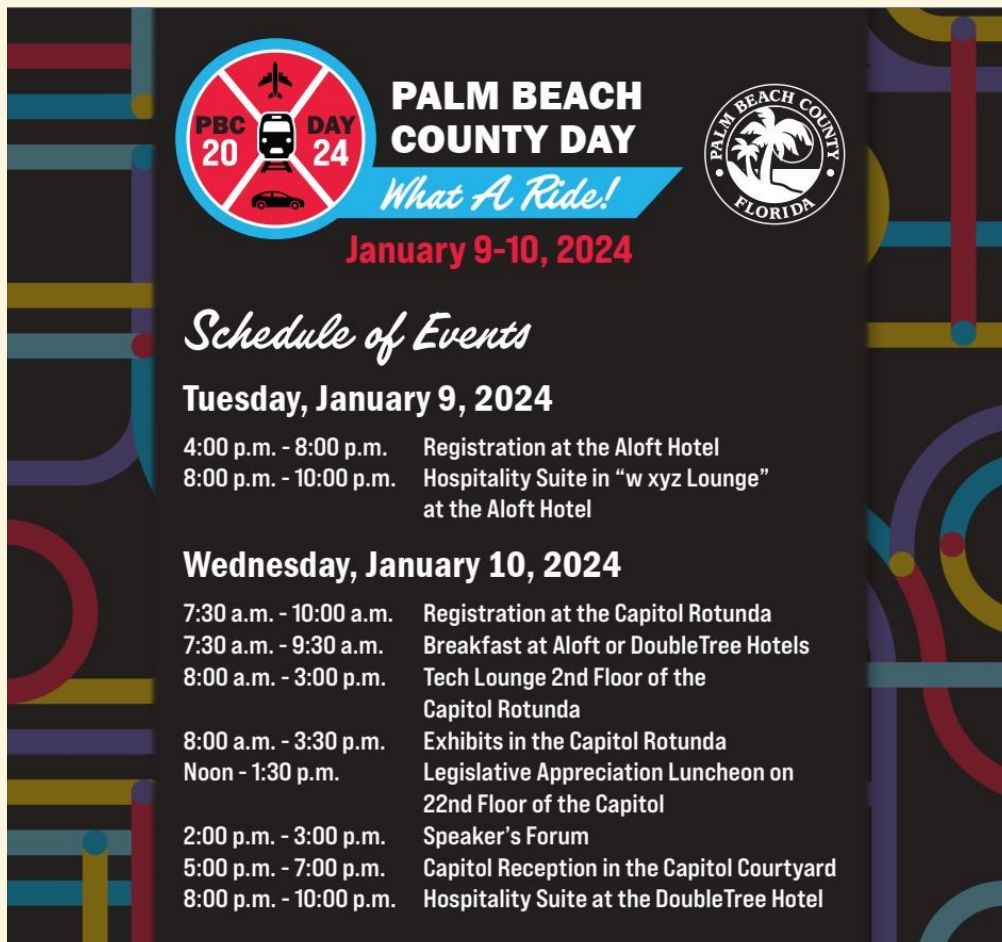
Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

The Joint Legislative Auditing Committee, comprised of both House and Senate members, voted to approve a request by Rep. Rick Roth (R-Loxahatchee) for an auditor general to conduct an operational audit of the City of Pahokee. The audit request arose from allegations of misuse of state grant funding for the rehabilitation of the restaurant, campground, and docks at the Pahokee Marina.

Looking Ahead

The final interim committee week in advance of the 2024 Legislative Session will take place on December 11-15.

Palm Beach County Days will be held January 9-10. A schedule of events is included below. We look forward to seeing you there!



The poster features a dark background with colorful abstract patterns on the left and right sides. At the top left is a circular logo with a red background and white text that reads "PBC DAY 20 24" around a central icon of a bus. To the right of this logo is the text "PALM BEACH COUNTY DAY" in white, followed by "What A Ride!" in a white script font, and "January 9-10, 2024" in red. To the right of the main text is the official seal of Palm Beach County, Florida, which depicts a palm tree and a sun within a circular border.

Schedule of Events

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Registration at the Aloft Hotel
8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	Hospitality Suite in "w xyz Lounge" at the Aloft Hotel

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

7:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Registration at the Capitol Rotunda
7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Breakfast at Aloft or DoubleTree Hotels
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Tech Lounge 2nd Floor of the Capitol Rotunda
8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Exhibits in the Capitol Rotunda
Noon - 1:30 p.m.	Legislative Appreciation Luncheon on 22nd Floor of the Capitol
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Speaker's Forum
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Capitol Reception in the Capitol Courtyard
8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	Hospitality Suite at the DoubleTree Hotel