

Please share - **yellow highlighted areas are important reads** - The next battle - "We will remember in November." We have already been threatened that this mess will return next year and be even worse for students, teachers and public education.

# FEA Frontline Report

---

April 30, 2010

## Final Week of the 2010 legislative session

Sine Die! It means “*without assigning a day for a further meeting or hearing.*” It means the Legislature has completed its business and has adjourned. Those two Latin words are the best two sounds a human can utter after 60 days of a process that is hard to describe to the world outside of Tallahassee. Perhaps Dickens’ words from *A Tale of Two Cities* come as close as any to what we saw this 2010 Legislative Session:

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”*

**Next on our plate: election season. If we don’t carefully consider our choices for candidates we could very well see another Senate Bill 6 pass in the 2011 Session — and be signed into law.**

## Quote of the week

*“We shouldn’t have to face a firing squad,”* Sen. Tony Hill (D-Jacksonville) during floor debate on the Anti-Fair Districts bill. He was describing the open hostility from legislators directed at supporters of Amendments 5 and 6 – the Fair Districts Amendments— as they presented public comment during the committee process.

## In this issue:

### Budget

**Bus Driver Notification going to the Governor!**

**Civics Education Bill going to the Governor**

**The Anti - Fair Districts Amendment to be on November ballot**

**Member lobbyists visiting Tallahassee**

## Budget

The House and Senate finalized the budget Monday shortly before midnight with a few items not agreed upon within the Conforming bill (language that provides spending directions and prescriptions).

The \$70.37 billion state budget provides:

- \$14 billion for Florida Schools
- \$2.8 billion for Class Size Reduction
- Uses \$872 million in federal stimulus money
- Per-student spending in the new budget will be very close to last year's spending around \$6,840 per student.
- NO provision in the budget (or other bills) to create a task force to study ideas similar to Senate Bill 6.
- The bill requires voter approval for school districts to impose an optional property tax of 25 cents for \$1,000 of assessed property value. The levy must be imposed to make the total potential funding projections.

To stave off tax increase and to balance the budget, the Legislature cut programs, provided no money for state worker pay raises, and injected another round of federal stimulus aid -- more than \$2 billion - in the budget. They also used more than \$400 million from the gambling deal with the Seminole tribe and dug into state trust funds.

### **Retirement:**

- No employee contribution required. Our members will not be required to personally contribute any percentage of their pay for retirement. Current law is maintained. This is a big win.
- Health Insurance Subsidy (HIS) – no FRS member will lose this subsidy. Current law is maintained. This is another big win.
- DROP – The program maintains current law for members currently in DROP. However, as of July 1, 2010, all new enrollees in DROP, the interest rate has been dramatically reduced from 6.5% down to 3%.

Significant changes were suggested to all of these programs for ideological and financial reasons but due to public pressure by FEA members sending emails and making phone calls to their legislators those changes failed to be included in the final legislation.

A recent OPPAGA report showed a potential \$15.4 billion shortfall in future payments helped spark debate about forcing the state's 27,000 workers to pay into the fund. Most of that fund deficit has been erased, which eased the call for changes.

### **Higher Education Notes:**

- Language that could have affected FEA higher education units was dropped. There will not be a required 3 percent pay cut for state employees – our university faculty and staff.
- Numbers suggest that students could pay up to an extra 15 percent for tuition. The tuition increases will not be covered by the Bright Futures scholarship.
- Big changes are coming to Bright Future. The budget cuts the scholarship awards \$1 per credit hour and tightens eligibility standards for future students. Also the awards will be harder to get.
- Early numbers suggest community colleges (state colleges) stand to receive \$1.12 billion in this next year's budget, compared with \$1.05 billion this year.

### **For those who want to go straight to the documents:**

- Here is the Conference Report on HB 5001, the appropriations bill (pages 1-47 contain the education sections): <http://myfloridahouse.gov/filestores/Adhoc/Appropriations/GAA/2010-House/Conference%20Report%20House%20Bill%205001.pdf>
- Here is the link for the FEFP Runs: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/filestores/Adhoc/Appropriations/GAA/2010-House/fefp.pdf>
- The final SUS Conference Report spreadsheet is attached

**Bus Driver Notification going to the Governor!**

**The “Bus Driver Notification” bill —SB 1058/HB603 by Sen. Aronberg (D-Greenacres) and Rep. Soto (D-Orlando) is on its way to becoming law!** The bill passed both chambers this week and will be on the governor’s desk soon. A big THANK YOU to the bill sponsors Sen. Aronberg and Rep. Soto and their staff Abby Ross and Christine Aleknavich for moving a FEA bill through the process in very difficult year! We held our breath every time the bills came up for debate after a couple of committee meetings spun out of control nearly derailing our bills! But the adept debate by Aronberg and Soto kept our bills rolling along through the process.

The bill would require that district superintendents notify the district director of transportation who would in turn notify the student’s bus driver if a student has been charged with a felony or a crime that would be considered a felony if the child were an adult. Current law only requires that the student’s principal and teachers be notified. The bill would also allow for the principal to notify any ESP who has sole supervisory duties over the student.

To read the final bill, go to: <http://www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2010/Senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s1058er.pdf>

## **Civics Education Bill going to the governor**

HB 105 Civics Education passed both chambers and will head to the governor’s desk. This bill creates the “Justice Sandra Day O’Connor Civics Education Act” and adds the following requirements for civics education:

For all grade levels beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the bill requires the reading portion of the language arts curriculum within the Sunshine State Standards to include civics education content.

For students entering grade 6 beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the bill requires the successful completion of a one-semester civics education course in order to be promoted from a school composed of grades 6, 7, and 8. The one-semester civics education course is to be designated as one of the three middle school social studies courses currently required for promotion.

The middle school civics education course must address the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments, the structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and the meaning and significance of historic documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, Declaration of Independence, and Constitution of the United States.

During the 2012-2013 school year, a statewide, standardized end-of-course assessment in civics education must be administered as a field test at the middle school level. During the 2013-2014 school year, each student’s performance on the end-of-course assessment in civics education must constitute 30 percent of the student’s final course grade. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, a student must earn a passing score on the end-of-course assessment in civics education in order to pass the course and receive course credit.

The bill includes the end-of-course assessment in civics education at the middle school level as a factor in designating a school’s grade beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. The bill does not appear to create a fiscal impact on school districts or local governments. However, the bill does have a fiscal impact on the Department of Education.

## **The Anti - Fair Districts Amendment to be on November ballot**

**25 Florida senators joined 74 members of the Florida House and put politicians ahead of the people.** They voted to pass SJR 2288/HJR 7231, which will place an amendment on the November ballot to ensure their own re-election. They don’t want to have to follow the rules for redistricting demanded by the voters who signed 1.7 million petitions for Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6.

The 25-14 vote was pretty much along party lines. Democratic Senators Gary Siplin (Orlando) and Al Lawson (Tallahassee) sided with the Republican majority. Sen. Paula Dockery (R-Lakeland) was the lone Republican voting against the measure, which was pushed by incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos (R-Merritt Island).

Legislators supporting the Anti-Fair Districts amendment claimed that their amendment is needed to “clarify” provisions of the Fair Districts amendments and “better protect” minority districts. But that claim is deceptive. This is a desperate attempt to derail the popular Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6.

What they are really up to is trying to confuse voters and, if passed, gut the provisions of the Fair Amendment-- if all were to pass on the November General Election Ballot. Confused? That is the intention of the proponents of SJR 2288 and HJR 7231. This is just another case of the legislature trying to fool the people of Florida – this time in a deceptive attempt to hold on to their power to draw districts that unfairly favor themselves or their colleagues.

The simple description of logic behind the Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6 is voters should choose their representatives — representatives shouldn’t be choosing their voters.

Visit [www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org](http://www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org) to find out more.

## **Member lobbyists visiting Tallahassee**

This final week member lobbyists came from Alachua, Okaloosa and Pasco counties. We were also visited by Miami-Dade and Pinellas counties during the Governor’s Race to the Top Work Group meeting. Thanks go out to our local lobbyist friends for their help this session: Chuck Kiker from Hillsborough CTA, Terrie Brady from Duval TU, Joe Minor and Karyn Cunningham from UT of Dade, Marshall Ogletree from Pinellas CTA/ESPA and Andrew Spar from Volusia TO.

*Questions? Call FEA Public Policy Advocacy at 850.224.2078*

*Thanks to Kevin Watson for his contributions to this report –*

*and thanks to Pat Dix for covering the second to the last week’s Frontline*

*while I was on another assignment.*

*Good night and farewell for another year!*