

Emergent Design and Development

Legislative Update 2009-10 #1

AUGUST 17, 2009

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year. This year, more than 2.6 million students will be attending public school in Florida districts. We hope everyone is looking forward to a successful and rewarding year.

Schools open throughout Florida with concerns regarding the possible shortfall of enrollment. The Legislature budgeted Districts on the basis of a decline in student population of 10,000 students. Several districts have indicated that the decline may be more than that. A shortfall in enrollment by a district would result in a further reduction of income from the state. A memo from Commissioner Smith, dated August 14th, 2009 indicated that the latest official forecast predicts a further decline of 2,700 students for the 2010-2011 school year.

BILLS ARE BEING FILED

While over 65 bills have already been filed, (30 in the Senate and 35 in the House), only 3 relate directly to education. The one that everyone will be interested in is HB 61 which increases the rigor of high school courses required for graduation. A brief description follows, with a link to the specific bill.

HB 31 Authorizes School Boards to permit delivery of inspirational messages at non-compulsory high school events.

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h0031.xml&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0031&Session=2010>

HB 55 Encourages School Boards to have an Academic Scholarship signing day.

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h0055.xml&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0055&Session=2010>

HB 61 This bill is the revival of a bill which failed to pass last year. The bill would phase in requirements for higher levels of mathematics and Science for a regular high school diploma.

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h0061.xml&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0061&Session=2010>

Another bill of interest, which may impact students more than others in the general population follows:

HB 41 This bill would make it illegal to text while driving.

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=h0041.xml&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0041&Session=2010>

Since the 2010 session is expected to face a shortfall of money, you can expect an increase in the number of education bills filed.

LEGISLATIVE DATES OF INTEREST

Committee weeks

October 5-9

November 2-6

December 7-11

Other weeks will be announced later

Regular session

Session starts March 2, 2010

Session ends April 30, 2010

STIMULUS FUNDING

The 2nd round of funding for Title 1, IDEA, and Vocational Rehabilitation will be released earlier than expected according to the USDOE website. However, as of July 24th, only 21% of released funds from phase one had been encumbered. One of the requirements of round two funding is the report of how round one funds were spent.

COMMON STANDARDS

The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have postponed the release of the common standards for Mathematics and Language Arts. Originally due for release on August 14th, the release is now expected in mid-September.

REVENUE ESTIMATES

On Tuesday August 11, 2009, the Revenue Estimating Conference was held. The economists agreed that tax collections are below expected levels. The shortfall is estimated to be \$147.1 million. Many felt that the shortfall would be greater than this. Many in Tallahassee are feeling that this is an indication that the economy is reaching some kind of equilibrium. The 2009 Legislature, when developing the current budget, built a “rainy day” fund for such shortfalls and there does not appear to be a need for a Special Session regarding the budget. The Commissioner’s memo of August 14th indicated a slight increase in general revenue. However, projections indicate continued slow growth and we are not expected to reach the 2006-2007 level of general revenue until after 2013. The report also indicates that Ad Valorem Assessments will decline this budget year and then start a period of slow growth .

PREPARATION FOR SWINE FLU

The vaccine for H1Ni virus is expected by mid-October. School Boards and administrators are deeply concerned regarding the possibility of a school wide outbreak.

Governor Crist and Commissioner Smith are crossing the state with a message for parent. “have children wash hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, and keep your child home when flu symptoms appear.” More tips are found at the Department of Health web site, www.myflusafety.com.

Any decision on whether or when to close a school, if it has a swine-flu outbreak, will be left to the local school district.

LINKS FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON FEDERAL LEGISLATION

U.S. House of Representative 2009 schedule: <http://democraticleader.house.gov/docUploads/2009-FINAL-CALENDAR120508.pdf>

U.S. Senate 2009 schedule: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/resources/pdf/2009_calendar.pdf

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions: <http://help.senate.gov>

U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor: <http://edlabor.house.gov>

U.S. Senate Budget Committee: <http://budget.senate.gov>

U.S. House Budget Committee: <http://www.house.gov/budget>

Congressional Budget Office: <http://www.cbo.gov>

Federal legislative Information: <http://thomas.loc.gov>

FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS

HR 3293 Dept. of Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education

HR 2847 Dept. of Commerce, Justice, Science, and related agencies.