



St. Lucie County

Legislative Update

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Our Mission....

To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.

HOUSE, SENATE \$200 MILLION APART ON ENVIRONMENT BUDGET

The House and Senate budget committees in charge of crafting initial budget recommendations for agencies dealing with natural resources and the environment released plans that differed by roughly \$200 million Jan. 28, 2016.



The House proposed to spend more money, with most of the difference coming from the Department of Environmental Protection. The House proposed to fund the Department \$1.7 billion, compared to the \$1.5 billion recommended by the Senate.

The House suggested that the state spend \$183 million on Everglades restoration projects, \$100 million of which would come from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF). The Senate recommended \$82 million in Everglades funding.

The Senate also recommended less money for land acquisition, \$97.4 million to the House's \$109.4 million. In The House budget the majority of that money is for Florida Forever (\$80.2 million) while in the Senate Florida Forever would only be allocated \$22.3 million.

Another \$27.7 million in land buying necessary for a number of wetland projects is present in both budgets.

The Senate and House both agree on water projects, which would receive \$50 million.

The Senate does, however, spend more money on springs restoration and protection than the House, proposing \$50 million for spring projects, \$48.1 million of which would come from LATF.

The two chambers were in agreement on overall spending for most other agencies, proposing to allocate \$1.7 billion to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, \$41.9 million to the Department of Citrus while differing only by a few million dollars on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (\$384 million in the Senate vs. \$376 million in the House.)

Click the links below



Watch Session Live:**Connect with
St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

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The House and Senate both presented budgets on law enforcement and public safety agencies Jan. 28, 2016, with each chamber offering plans that would spend roughly \$3.5 billion on those departments in the upcoming fiscal year.

Both the House Justice Appropriations Subcommittee and the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations recommended allocating \$2.4 billion to the Department of Corrections, but the Senate's budget included more money to increase prison staff (\$12 million to the House's \$8 million).

The House's budget, though, provided more money for maintenance -- \$25 million for various fixed capital outlay projects, including \$1.6 million for wastewater treatment and water system repairs also in the Senate's \$13.2 million recommendation for similar maintenance and repair projects.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement would receive \$290 million under the House budget and about \$280.8 million in FDLE's budget. \$2.35 million of their budget would be to work through a backlog of untested sexual assault kits held by law enforcement agencies across the state, roughly equivalent to the Senate's recommendation.

The House also recommends \$1.7 million to hire new investigators for use of force investigations requested by other law enforcement agencies. The Senate's budget does not include that recommendation, but would include \$3.8 million to fund more personal at state crime labs.

The Senate budget would also provide \$7 million less to the Department of Juvenile Justice than the House's \$547 million recommendation and \$4 million less for the Department of Legal Affairs.

SENATE TED PROPOSES \$1.4 BILLION DEO BUDGET

A \$250 million economic incentive fund sought by Gov. Rick Scott would form the centerpiece of the Department of Economic Opportunity's \$1.4 billion budget under a draft budget proposal from the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development.

But at the behest of the Senate's leadership, \$100 million of that funding would be tied to money from the state's settlement with BP for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Latvala said Attorney General Pam Bondi had assured him the money would be forthcoming, but also indicated the timeline of the settlement's release could be a problem.

The budget also included \$218 million for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership and \$85 million for affordable housing programs including the State Incentive Apartment Loan program.

Latvala acknowledged that was significantly more money than those programs are likely to receive in the final appropriations bill.

"The fact of the matter is that the House is going to be nowhere near us on this area, so it just puts us in a negotiating position where we end up a little higher than we would otherwise because we use the full pot to start with," Latvala said.

The draft also includes an extra 1.5 million to improve anti-fraud efforts in the state's unemployment insurance program and provides \$24 million in one-time funding to Visit Florida. That maintains the marketing agency's budget from last year, when it also receive a non-recurring \$24 million boost.



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BILL DEDICATING AMENDMENT 1 TO EVERGLADES RESTORATION PASSES FIRST COMMITTEE

A proposal (HB 989 by Rep. Gayle Harrell, R-Stuart) to statutorily mandate that the state create a dedicated revenue stream from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to implement Everglades restoration projects unanimously passed its first committee Jan. 28, 2016.

The bill would set aside 25 percent of the money in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, after paying off debt services, up to \$200 million would be devoted to Everglades Restoration projects including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the Central Everglades Planning Project (still awaiting Congressional approval), the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Long-Term Plan and the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.

\$32 million of the funds set aside by the act would go to SFWMD to implement projects in the Long-Term Plan until the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

After that \$32 million is deducted, either 75.6 percent or \$100 million of the remaining funds will go directly to CERP until the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Preference would be given to projects that reduce discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the St. Lucie or Caloosahatchee estuaries.

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, \$32 million would go to the Long-Term Plan, \$100 million would go to CERP and \$66 million would go to the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program. The bill was supported by a wide range of environmental groups, including the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the Audubon Society and the Everglades Foundation.

The Senate companion, SB 1186 by Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart, has not yet had a hearing.

FEDERAL UPDATE

Provided by Van Scoyoc Associates

As you may know, Congress has worked over the past several months to develop legislation aimed at reforming the criminal justice system, with the Administration also placing a lot of emphasis on the issue. The legislative effort consists of several different pieces of legislation, three of which we have outlined below:

The first, and largest, of the bills – the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015 (S. 2123) – is designed to address overcrowding in the federal prison population by reducing mandatory minimums for certain prison sentences, such as non-violent, non-trafficking drug offenses, while also raising the mandatory minimum for other crimes, such as domestic violence. The bill would also promote the expungement of certain juvenile offenses, increase opportunities for juveniles to be parole-eligible, and establish pre-release reentry programs to help incarcerated individuals prepare to reenter society. S. 2123 was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee by a vote of 15-5 and is awaiting consideration on the Senate floor.

A second bill – the Second Chance Reauthorization Act (S. 1513/H.R. 3406) – would reauthorize and streamline the Second Chance Act programs, which provide grants, training, and technical assistance to states, local governments, and nonprofits to prevent criminal recidivism. The various programs include demonstration grants, reentry courts, mental health and addiction treatment, and employment services, among others. The House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 3406 earlier this month, but S. 1513 has not yet been considered in the Senate.

Another bill - the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.993/H.R. 1854) - would reauthorize and update the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act to help facilitate collaboration among the criminal justice, juvenile justice, mental health treatment, and substance abuse systems to ensure those with mental illness receive the care they need. The Senate unanimously passed S. 993 in December and the House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 1854 earlier this month. It has not yet been passed by the full House.

The exact path and timeline for criminal justice reform is still unclear. There has been some recent disagreement within the parties on the measures, which could derail the bipartisan efforts. However, the White House, key lawmakers, and outside groups continue to press for criminal justice reform, and many still see it as one of the few issues that can be successfully tackled this year.