



St. Lucie County Legislative Update

Inside this issue:

Property Tax Cut	1
Budget Bills	1
Lake O	2
Gambling	2
Charter Schools	2

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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 PURSUES PROPERTY TAX CUT

Voters next year could be asked to expand Florida's homestead property-tax exemption under a measure introduced Wednesday in the House that quickly drew objections from local governments.

As a companion to a nearly \$300 million tax-cut package (PCB WMC 17-06), the House Ways & Means Committee voted 13-6 to approve a proposal (PCB WMC 17-04) that would ask voters in November 2018 to expand by \$25,000 the non-school homestead exemption, encompassing property valued between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

Rep. Mike La Rosa, a St. Cloud Republican and real-estate developer who is handling the bill for the committee, said it is about making homeownership more affordable. The Senate does not have a version of the bill.

The state Revenue Estimating Conference projected that, if approved by voters, local governments collectively would see non-school property-tax revenue drop by \$752.7 million annually starting in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

APPROPRIATIONS BILLS HEAD TO THE FLOOR

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees April 5, 2017, agreed to their respective budget plans for the next fiscal year.

The upper chamber rapidly adopted more than 100 amendments that include local projects and budget language giving directions to execute existing line-items. The House slightly modified its budget plan as well.

PCB APC 17-01 and SPB 2500 -- as well as their implementing bills and some conforming bills - will now be refiled as House and Senate bills and head to the chamber floors for consideration and possible amendments by all members.

The chambers are expected to debate and pass their budgets next week.

Once the two chambers have passed their versions of the budget they will enter into budget conference negotiations that will end when both have the exact same budget.

Since the Senate is ceremonially hosting the negotiation, the agreement will be added to the Senate budget bills and sent to the governor.

Click the links below



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CARLOS LOPEZ-CANTERA

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

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A bill to build a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee cleared the Senate budget committee Wednesday, its final stop before a full Senate vote.

The committee voted for SB 10 with support from the only lawmaker who voted against it in a previous committee, Sen. Oscar Braynon, D-Miami Gardens. He said he changed his mind after Senate President Joe Negron added provisions to help train displaced agricultural workers and boost economic development in the Glades area south of the lake.

Facing opposition to his reservoir plan to curb Lake Okeechobee discharges, Negron overhauled the bill Tuesday to better its chances of becoming law. Instead of buying 60,000 acres from farmers, the bill now would use 14,000 acres the state owns and leases to Florida Crystals until 2019. It complements that with some smaller private land purchases, swaps with private owners and other existing state lands leased to farmers. That cut the project cost, split between the state and federal government, from \$2.4 billion to \$1.5 billion.

A shallow reservoir is planned on the parcel known as A-2, so the state would deepen it to 14 feet to store 240,000 acre-feet of excess lake water. The state also could use an adjacent reservoir called A-1 that now cleans Everglades-bound water to store at least an additional 120,000 acre-feet.

More land likely would be needed to clean the water once it leaves the reservoir, and the bill directs the South Florida Water Management District to negotiate breaking its leases with farmers or to look at buying additional acres.

FLORIDA HOUSE VOTES TO FREEZE GAMBLING IN STATE

The Florida House Wednesday voted 73-40 for a bill that would "freeze" gambling across the state. The legislation is vastly different from a version approved by the Florida Senate.

The Senate bill would allow slot machines at dog and horse tracks in eight counties outside of South Florida. It would also allow the Seminole Tribe to offer craps and roulette at its casinos.

The House measure would allow the tribe to keep its slot machines and blackjack tables for 20 years but would not let them offer additional games. The legislation also confines slot machines to tribal-run casinos and tracks in South Florida.

Rep. Mike La Rosa, the House bill sponsor, said the bill establishes "a structure" that allows the House to negotiate with the Senate, which he hopes to convince that "gaming should be boxed up and put on the shelf," says The News Service of Florida. The Senate bill's sponsor, Sen. Bill Galvano, said "timing is not yet determined" for negotiations, according to The News-Press.

Legislators have a month left to reach an agreement amid heavy lobbying effort from those in the

PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO SHARE TAX FUNDING WITH CHARTERS

The House Appropriations Committee Wednesday approved a measure that would allow charter schools to receive capital outlay funding from local taxes.

Currently, school districts are allowed but not required to share the 1.5 percent millage revenue from property taxes with charter schools. HB 5103, previously PCB PKA 17-01, would require that revenue to be shared among local school districts and charter schools.

While the Senate is offering \$75 million each to school districts and charter schools, the House is proposing \$100 million for charter schools and \$20 million for school districts.

HB 5103 would add a portion of that funding to the \$100 million in capital outlay funding proposed by the House.

The Senate has its own bill that would steer district money to charters, but that legislation has stalled.