

SHUMAKER

ADVISORS

2022 FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE SESSION

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Week of January 24th-28th

HIGHLIGHTS

The third week of Florida's 2022 Regular Legislative Session concluded on Friday. This week, the legislature continued diligent work to pass meaningful pieces of legislation and made strides in the redistricting process. Twenty-seven bills have passed the full membership of the Senate as of this week and await House consideration to cross the finish line to the Governor's desk. Two of the bills passed this week are measures to protect local businesses by allowing them to collect damages from their municipality for any damaging ordinances ([SB 620](#)), and requiring local governments to provide estimations of how new regulations could impact local businesses ([SB 280](#)). Other noteworthy legislation approved by the Senate this week includes bills that update telehealth protocols regarding controlled substances ([SB 312](#)), that classify religious institutions as essential in a state of emergency ([SB 254](#)), and that establish the strawberry shortcake as Florida's official state dessert ([SB 1006](#)).

IN THE BUDGET

House and Senate Appropriations Chairs in each silo of the budget are expected to begin crafting their budget spreadsheets next week. Once each Appropriations Subcommittee has presented their spreadsheets, the House and Senate must concur line-item by line-item in order to achieve a balanced and agreed-upon budget.

The state budget was expected to total approximately



Senator Manny Diaz presents his proposal to update telehealth regulations in its final committee last week. The bill passed the full Senate on Thursday. Photo via FloridaRedistricting.com

100 billion dollars, but new estimates from the State Revenue Estimating Conference show Florida collecting more than three billion dollars in additional sales tax revenue for FY 2021-2022. Tax revenue contributes to the General Revenue funding pot, which funds things such as education, prisons, and health care. The additional revenue comes as a result of federal stimulus payments and COVID-19 relief funding, which seem to have stimulated the economy during a rough patch in economies nationwide. Senate President Wilton Simpson stated this week that one billion dollars worth of General Revenue funding will ideally go to increasing state workers' wages to \$15 per hour this year, four years ahead of the implementation of the ballot-approved \$15 minimum wage requirement for all workers. The wage increases, according to Simpson, will affect state employees and contractors, including workers in education and health care.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

HEALTH CARE A telehealth proposal passed the Senate floor this week, and its companion is ready for introduction on the House floor. Last year, several telehealth-related proposals fell short of approval, dying before being heard on the floor. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the need for telehealth services, highlighting statutory inhibitions surrounding them. **SB 312/HB 17**, if passed, would allow for audio-only telehealth visits and the prescription of certain controlled substances via telehealth, both prohibited under current Florida statute.

EDUCATION Lawmakers serving on education committees heard more of the same this week, engaging in conversations surrounding parental rights, school choice, school board salaries and library materials, and students with disabilities. Conversations regarding parental rights and charter schools carry the same themes as last year, with proposals **HB 1557** and **HB 865/SB 758** moving through committees this week and potentially increasing parents' access to student information and changing how charter schools are authorized, respectively. Additionally, the Senate proposal (**SB 1048**) to implement progress monitoring in place of Florida's Statewide Assessments (FSA) only has one committee stop left following its unanimous approval in committee on Wednesday.

ENVIRONMENT Legislation for the protection and restoration of Florida's environment and natural resources that moved this week includes a measure to require the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to review all proposed projects near the everglades (**HB 729**) and to decrease landfill usage by creating a Solid Waste-to-Energy program within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (**SB 1764**). Senator Albritton's proposal to use nonrecyclable materials to create heat, electricity, or fuel could reduce materials buried in landfills by up to 87 percent, according to analysts. Finally, the legislature moved a proposal that the DEP compose regulations and requirements for grease waste removal, which have previously been exclusively under the jurisdiction of local governments (**HB 1177/SB 1110**).



Florida Senate members gather to vote on several bills, including Senator Travis Hutson's local government lawsuit bill. Photo via Tallahassee Democrat.

MISCELLANEOUS Florida's state tourism marketing arm will receive an extension on its repeal date under a bill passed by its final committee this week. **HB 489** would extend the repeal date of Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, better known as VISIT Florida, from October 1, 2023 to October 1, 2028. The bill and its Senate companion (**SB 434**) are both gearing up for floor votes.

Juveniles will have broadened abilities to expunge their criminal arrest records under a House proposal (**HB 195**) approved by its penultimate committee stop this week. The bill would expunge nonjudicial arrest records for minors who complete a diversion program for specified felony offenses, instead of only misdemeanor offenses. Its Senate companion (**SB 342**) also has one remaining committee vote before the floor.

Zephyrhills Senator Danny Burgess, the former Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and Army reservist, has proposed a measure (**SB 1712**) that would create a Veteran Suicide Prevention Pilot Training Program. The program would require the DVA to contract with an organization to develop curriculum for prevention training and to submit an annual report to the Legislature. The bill was approved by its first committee stop on Tuesday and has two more stops before hitting the floor.

QUESTIONS?

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