

FSBA

BOARDER-LINE

Official Legislative Bulletin of the
Florida School Boards Association

January 3, 2011

Volume 2011, Number 1

During the 2010 election cycle, the Republican Party swept all of the races for the Governor and Cabinet posts. In addition, Republicans secured a “veto-proof” (2/3) super-majority in both the Florida House and Senate. This firm control of both the Executive and Legislative branches of Florida’s government is likely to make it easier for [Governor Rick Scott](#), [Senate President Mike Haridopolos](#), and [House Speaker Dean Cannon](#) to successfully pursue the priorities that were espoused during the campaign.

During his campaign and since his election, Governor Scott has advocated for a number of education related proposals. Perhaps the most significant of these is his proposal to reduce school property taxes by at least 1 mill – equal to a loss of about \$1.46 billion in education funding – which he believes can be recaptured through efficiencies and funding reductions in other areas. The Governor has also expressed support for a teacher evaluation and merit pay system similar to that set forth last year in SB 6. In addition, he has proposed expanding private, charter, and home school choice options and for providing parental control over how state per-student funding is spent. Another priority will be a substantial revision of the Florida Retirement System and collective bargaining provisions. He has surrounded himself with an Education Transition Team – including, among others, education policy advisors Michelle Rhee and Patricia Levesque, voucher program founder John Kirtley, and charter school officials Dennis Bakke and Jonathan Hage – that has developed recommendations in support of these, and other, education initiatives. We have posted the full recommendations of Scott’s Education Transition Team on the FSBA website at www.fsba.org along with this issue of Boarder-Line – please click on the Boarder-Line icon on our main page or use this direct link: [ScottEducationTransitionTeamRecommendations](#). *(Additional education related documents and the recommendations from all of Scott’s other Transition Teams are available at: <http://www.scribd.com/ScottTransition>)*

Legislative leaders have indicated support for many of the recommendations listed by Governor Scott and his transition team – especially those relating to teacher evaluation and compensation, revision of the FRS, and revising collective bargaining provisions. Legislators have also added some priorities of their own. In particular, Senate President Mike Haridopolos has long been an advocate for limitations on state and local government revenue – a concept commonly referred to as TABOR (an acronym for Taxpayers Bill of Rights). Although Senator Haridopolos has had little success in enacting such a measure, he may be able to find more support for his proposal during his tenure as Senate President. FSBA remains staunchly opposed to TABOR-style initiatives and we have been working with a coalition of interested parties to defeat any TABOR measure.

The debate about TABOR, vouchers, teacher evaluation and compensation, FRS, and other issues will all take place against the backdrop of Florida’s lackluster economy. In a presentation in early December, state economists made it clear that Florida is struggling through an abnormally slow recovery -- although Florida’s economy is improving, the improvement has not been as strong as had been projected and revenues remain well below 2007 levels. *(We have posted the latest “Economic Overview” and a summary of the most recent General Revenue Estimating Conference on the FSBA website at <http://www.fsba.org/briefsupdates.asp#2011Session>)*

In crafting the 2011-2012 budget, legislators will need approximately \$26 billion in general revenue to fund ONLY the state budget's essential and critical needs. The most recent (as of December 2010) projection of general revenue that will be available for the 2011-2012 budget is about \$24.4 billion, which leaves a general revenue shortfall of AT LEAST \$1.6 billion. This shortfall could easily grow to as much as \$3.5 billion if, in addition to the essential and critical needs, legislators also funded high priority needs and/or restored operating reserves and/or had to address rising Medicaid costs.

With respect to the impact of a \$1.6 billion shortfall on school district budgets, it is important to keep in mind that K-12 education usually consumes about 35% of the state's general revenue each year and, therefore, might be expected to absorb about 35% of the general revenue shortfall, or about \$560 million. School districts might also be impacted by declining school property tax revenues which would add another \$150 million to the school district revenue shortfall, for a total of about \$710 million statewide. To offset this shortfall, districts budgets would need to be cut by 3-4%. However, the legislature has often taken steps to off-set reductions to education funding, so a 3-4% cut is, by no means, a foregone conclusion.

In order to assist our members in advocating for students, FSBA is in the process of creating or updating our background materials and talking points on education funding, TABOR, vouchers, teacher quality, the Florida Retirement System, and other issues. We will post them on the FSBA website and notify you when they are available.

Key Legislators & Committees

Senate President Mike Haridopolos and House Speaker Dean Cannon have now appointed the leadership and membership of the various Senate and House Committees. We have posted a list of the key education related committees on the FSBA website at www.fsba.org along with this issue of Boarder-Line (please click on the Boarder-Line icon on the main page or use this direct link: <http://www.fsba.org/boarderline.asp>). This committee list also provides live links to the website for each committee where you may access the committee members, meeting agenda, meeting packet, and other information. FSBA encourages you to familiarize yourself with these committees and to note those members who represent your school district so that you may contact these legislators when issues of interest come up during the Session. We have also posted a separate directory of the email addresses of each legislator.

FSBA Bill Tracking

Typically, more than 350 education related bills are filed for consideration during each Legislative Session. FSBA maintains a list and brief summary of the bills that are of particular interest and this list is posted on the FSBA website with each issue of Boarder-Line (please click on the Boarder-Line icon on the main page or use this direct link: <http://www.fsba.org/boarderline.asp>). Our Tracking List links each bill number to the House or Senate web page that can provide additional information about the bill, including the bill sponsor, bill text, legislative staff analysis, and recent actions. Bills of particular interest are also discussed in greater detail in each issue of Boarder-Line.

Important Dates

January 10-14, 2011	Interim Committee Meetings
January 21, 2011	FSBA/FAC/FLC Joint Officers Meeting
January 24-28, 2011	Interim Committee Meetings
February 6-8, 2011	Federal Relations Network Conference
February 7-11, 2011	Interim Committee Meetings
February 14-18, 2011	Interim Committee Meetings
February 21-25, 2011	Interim Committee Meetings
March 8, 2011	2011 Legislative Session Convenes
March 22-23, 2011	FSBA New Board Member Orientation
March 23-24, 2011	FSBA Day In the Legislature Conference
March 25, 2011	FSBA Board of Directors Meeting
May 6, 2010	2011 Legislative Session Adjourns

* * * * *

FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Wilbert "Tee" Holloway, Chair
Jerry Taylor, Vice Chairman
FSBA Legislative Committee

Dr. Wayne Blanton, Executive Director
blanton@fsba.org

Ruth Melton, Director of Legislative Relations
melton@fsba.org

203 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
Phone 850/414-2578 Fax 850/414-2585
www.fsba.org