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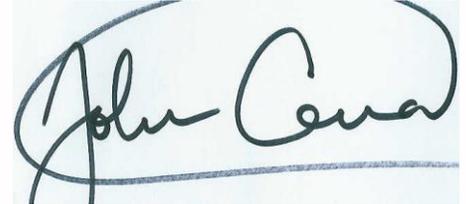
Memorandum

To: FASP Board of Directors

From: John Cerra, FLIBS Governmental Consultant

Date: April 4, 2016

Re: 2016 Session Wrap Up Report



Every Legislative session has two or three defining issues which steer the House and Senate through the legislative process. This year was no different. Three issues dominated the legislative session: the Governor's proposed \$1.0 billion in tax cuts, the Governor's proposed economic development fund, and the extension of the Seminole Gaming Compact. When the dust settled at the end of the 2016 session, the Legislature provided significant tax cuts that were totally different than the Governor's recommendations, they zero funded the Governor's economic development proposal, and they failed to pass an extended Seminole Gaming Compact.

House and Senate Budget

In the final budget passed by the House and the Senate, only minimal increases to the state's public education budget were approved, although total public school funding is at a new historical high. On the average, the budget provides a 1.0 percent increase per student, but most of this increase is wrapped up in extra funding of the ESE Guaranteed Allocation, funding for required extra instructional time at specified schools, and required additional funds for technology.

As part of the budget process, the state's Best and Brightest scholarship program was increased to \$49.0 million and will be distributed as \$10,000 bonuses to teachers who qualify, based largely on scores from college entrance exams. The Base Student Allocation (BSA) was raised in the 2016 budget to \$4,160.71, which is an increase of \$6.26 or 0.15 percent. Total average funding per student is \$7,178.49, which is an increase of \$71.16 per student or 1.0 percent. The Governor requested a 2.76 percent increase in total funding, relying heavily on greater local property tax collections which were the result of rising local property values to reach that funding level. The House and Senate decided instead to reduce the local property tax rate for public schools, which resulted in a much smaller increase in funding. For comparison, the Governor's recommended funding per unweighted FTE's for the 2016-17 year was \$7,220.59 per student.

ESE Guaranteed Allocation – \$1,055,304,496 for 2016-17

This year the increase to the ESE guaranteed allocation was finally more than the last two years, which involved less than 1.0 percent growth. This year the Legislature increased the allocation from \$959,182,058 to \$1,055,304,496. It is nice to see the Legislature increase this very important student allocation.

Bills of Particular Interest:

HB 377 - Relating to Exceptional Student Education – 2016 – DID NOT PASS

The bill relates to Dyslexia/Exceptional Student Education. It required the Department of Education to establish the Dyslexia Choice Academy Pilot Project and mandated the Duval County School Board to provide mentoring services to participating school districts that were to be providing the Dyslexia Choice Academy. As part of the bill, there were school district, department, and legislative funding requirements mandated to be spent on the pilot program. The bill moved through committees in the House but was stalled in the Senate. The great thing for school psychologist was that the bill mandated the hiring of a school psychologist at the pilot school site. As the process moved on, this bill was shelved for a broader reading initiative in the House and Senate, HB 7021 and SB 1068.

HB 7021/ SB 1068 - Relating to Reading Instruction – 2016 – DID NOT PASS

This bill died largely due to opposition to it in the Senate. There were many attempts by the House sponsors to revitalize this legislation. It was amended to another large bill in the House and was sent to the Senate, where the amendment was deleted from further consideration.

The bill related to general reading instruction and revised provisions relating to the Just Read, Florida! office, school improvement plans and early warning systems, as well as instruction and intervention for students with substantial reading deficiencies. The bills also included parental notification for students with substantial reading difficulties. The bills would have revised provisions relating to educator training and certification, teacher preparation programs, and the School Community Professional Redevelopment Act.

The important part for school psychologists is that under the early warning systems section of the bill, which starts on page 9, line 231 of House Bill 7021 the wording was as follows:

A school district may identify additional early warning indicators for use in a school's early warning system. 2. A school-based team responsible for implementing the requirements of this paragraph shall monitor the data from the early warning system in subparagraph (a)2. **The team may include a school psychologist.**

Hopefully, this bill will be revisited next session.

Major Education Package - HB 7029 - Passed

A major package of public education issues was put together during the final week of session to include what were previously more than two dozen separate member bills. Issues are staked together in these packages to make it easier to move on issues that some members dislike by linking them to others that they do support.

- ▶ Parent Rights / Student Choice
 - ▶ Any Public School with Capacity in Any District Starting in 2017-2018 Must Accept any Student from any District
 - ▶ School Board Defines Capacity of Each School
 - ▶ Requests for Teacher Transfers Must be Answered within 2 Weeks
 - ▶ Class Size Penalty Reductions for Public Schools of Choice Retained
 - ▶ Fiscal Transparency Reporting Requirement Created
 - ▶ Athletic Transfers Legally Authorized in Most Cases
 - ▶ Transportation the Responsibility of Parents unless Board Decides to Serve
- ▶ School Boards Association Provisions
- ▶ School Board Powers and Duties – School Visits
- ▶ Charter Schools
 - ▶ Applicants Must Disclose Key Persons/Providers/Histories
 - ▶ Allows up to 2 Years for Approved Applicant to Open
 - ▶ Restricts Student Dismissals for Academic Performance
 - ▶ Allows Voluntary Closure by Charter Board
 - ▶ Requires Florida Location for Capital Outlay Funding
 - ▶ Provides Charters Legal Remedy for Local Government Building and Site Planning Disputes
 - ▶ District Must Timely Fund Charter Schools Even When Revenues Are Not Yet Received by District
 - ▶ Virtual Credit via Alternative Methods
 - ▶ Charter Capital Outlay Formula Changes
 - ▶ Elimination of Double Session and Experimental Calendars from Instructional Hour Requirements – Adjustments to FTE for Those Providing Less than Full Hours
- ▶ School District Construction Limits
 - ▶ Special Facilities Changes
 - ▶ Study on Cost per Student Station Amounts (EDR)
 - ▶ Study on SREF Compliance Costs and Possible Flexibility (OPPAGA)
 - ▶ Sanctions for Exceeding Cost per Student Station Limits from any Funding Source with Exceptions
- ▶ Repeal of FTE Adjustment Language Based Upon Algebra I EOC Outcomes
- ▶ Federally Connected Student Supplement Codified
- ▶ Auditory-Oral Education Programs
 - ▶ VPK Eligibility Change to Allow Delay of Entry
 - ▶ High School Athletics Changes
 - ▶ Eligibility

- ▶ Other Association
- ▶ Coaches and District Employee Penalties
- ▶ School Board Policies
- ▶ Youth Suicide Prevention Training Program
- ▶ School Construction Flexibility
- ▶ Re-employment of Instructional Personnel
- ▶ Pledge of Allegiance
- ▶ Seal of Bi-literacy

Web-page updates:

Make sure you use the FASP webpage. One link on which you can find more legislative information is the Public Policy and Professional Relations committee page. On the webpage we will have updated news, live links on the bill list, contact information, and a lot more. Thanks, Michelle!!!!

The website address:

http://fasp.org/Standing_Committees/Public_Policy_Professional_Relations.html

What's Next

The Presidential primaries and election season will dominate the next few months of the calendar. The only way that any legislative action would be possible would be if a special session were needed based upon a crisis or perceived crisis for the state. This is not expected, so it should be quiet legislatively until after the November elections.

The Legislature will conduct interim committee meetings beginning after the reorganization in mid-November. During these meetings the Legislature will work on drafting substantive legislation and review the results of interim studies conducted over the summer and fall. In March of 2017, the Legislature will convene the 2017 Regular Session.

Conclusion

Cerra Consulting Group is proud to represent FASP and to work with your leaders for the advancement of your programs in Florida. If you have any questions about the legislative process or any other issue/bills to be considered during the 2016 session, please contact us at cerraj@comcast.net.