

District 93 State Representative **PERRY THURSTON**



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District 93 State Representative **PERRY THURSTON**



2010 UPDATE FROM THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**This newsletter contains important information about your 2010 Florida State Legislature, including new laws that may affect YOU!**

## EDUCATION UPDATE.

**I believe that improving public education is the first step toward creating high-wage jobs and a quality workforce that the 21st Century economy demands. That's why I hoped the Legislature would have made greater progress on education reforms and would have invested more in our schools.**

I don't think the state budget approved by the Legislature holds education harmless. It increases the average per-student spending by a one dollar and 22 cents. School officials say their expenses, including insurance, retirement and utilities will outstrip that increase. The budget also allows for university tuition hikes of up to 15 percent, just as it cuts scholarship awards under Bright Futures.

I am particularly disappointed by the Legislature's decision to pass Senate

Bill 6, a measure that drew widespread attention and criticism from across the state for how it would have altered public school teacher benefits. Thankfully, Governor Crist vetoed this bill, which in my view, would have punished our school teachers and harmed education in our state.

Also this session, Governor Crist signed Senate Bill 4, a bipartisan measure that raises education standards and improves accountability and advances some of the reforms touted this year by some members of the Florida House Democratic Caucus. Senate Bill 4 phases out the high school Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in math, science and writing, and it introduces end-of-course exams in Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology 1.

Florida has made great strides in



improving education since voters passed the Class Size Reduction, and schools are less crowded. In 2002, the average classroom for PreK-3 was 23, today it is 16. The average classroom size for grades 4-8 was 24, today it is 19; and the average classroom for grades 9-12 was 24, today it is 22. This November, voters will be asked to revisit the class size goals. I believe that the plan going back to the voters to change the class size amendment risks unraveling the progress and weakening class-size gains.

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**Councils/Committee Membership:**  
Finance & Tax Council  
*Democratic Ranking Member*  
Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee  
Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council  
Policy Council  
Rules & Calendar Council  
Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning  
Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys  
2010 Sunshine Census Statewide Complete Count Committee

## DEAR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

Session has ended and as always it is good to be home in our community. Due to the National Economy and a reduction in sales taxes this Session was practically challenging.

In writing a new state budget, we faced a \$3.6 billion revenue shortfall. We were able to craft a budget with Federal Stimulus Funds and the Seminole Revenue Compact. The final product will include a reduction in services and programs for our working class families.

I am pleased to have successfully passed my priority bill that will help with Florida's economic recovery and create new jobs. House Bill 821 Florida International Arbitration Act. HB 821, positions the Sunshine State as a prime location to settle international business disputes by adopting the UNCITRAL Model International Arbitration Law ("Model Law") as the law regulating international commercial arbitration proceedings conducted in Florida. "The passage of this legislation is yet another critical step in Florida's emergence as one of the

most important international arbitration centers in the world."

In an effort to further stimulate our economy, we passed HB 697, which is a comprehensive employment sustaining legislation for our state.

This year we undertook a number of serious initiatives designed to reform our School and Healthcare system. Those changes would have had major implications for our seniors, students and most vulnerable citizens. We had spirited and thoughtful debate and discussion about these issues.

I will continue to keep you updated throughout the summer on information regarding legislation that passed this year. It is my pleasure to serve you in the Florida House of Representatives. I urge you to contact my office if I can assist you with anything. Again I am honored to represent our community in the Florida Legislature.

Sincerely,

*Perry Thurston*

**Perry Thurston**  
State Representative, District 93

## District 93 Appropriations for 2010-2011:

### Passed the House:

Fort Lauderdale River Oaks Storm water.....	\$800,000
City of Lauderdale Hills-NW 47th Avenue Improvements.....	\$300,000
Broward College- Institute of Public Safety-Building 22.....	\$6,900,000

## FLORIDA 2010: MAKING THE SWITCH TO RENEWABLE ENERGY.

THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION, I SUPPORTED POLICIES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES, AND THE JOBS THAT WILL BE CREATED IN THAT GROWING ECONOMIC SECTOR. AND TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MARKETS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY, I SUPPORTED SMART INVESTMENTS IN IMPORTANT PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

But given Florida's budgetary crisis, the Legislature had to be prudent and resourceful. That's why I backed a bipartisan effort to make clean energy technology accessible to homeowners and businesses. Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing, which is at the

heart of HB 7179, provides local governments the flexibility to create programs to lend funds that homeowners or businesses can use to pay for improvements such as solar panels, high-efficiency water heaters, and storm hardening for their homes. The loans can be repaid over time depending on the amount and specific terms of the loan and can also be repaid as part of a participating homeowner's property tax bill.

There's another good program I strongly supported started this year. From April 16 through April 25, Florida residents were able to receive a rebate on the purchase of energy-efficient appliances. The program was a big success. Consumers saved money on the purchase price of the designated ENERGY STAR appliances, and will save money each month on their energy and water bill. Retailers all over Florida benefitted through the large increase in sales of appliances. Sales exceeded \$62 million with over \$4 million in sales taxes collected.

## CENSUS 2010:

### THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LAUNCHES [WWW.MYFLORIDACENSUS.GOV](http://WWW.MYFLORIDACENSUS.GOV)

The countdown to July 10, the last day to be counted in the 2010 Census, is underway, and state and local officials and community leaders are working to ensure an accurate count for Florida. Conducted every 10 years, the census defines who we are as a nation. It guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels and provides insight into population, state, local and tribal government funding and more. I was honored to be one of four members of the House elected to serve on the Statewide Complete Count Committee.

With the clock ticking, the Florida House of Representatives is helping to achieve a complete and accurate count through [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov). The website allows Floridians to share information about the census in communities throughout Florida. In turn, the Florida House of Representatives works with the U.S. Census Bureau to account for streets, neighborhoods and communities that may otherwise be missed in the 2010 Census. By logging on to [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) and telling us if you have been counted, you are speaking on behalf of your whole community. Every year, the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to state, local and tribal governments

based on census data. Every additional Floridian counted is worth approximately \$1,500 per year in additional federal funding. Census data also determines congressional representation and guides local decision-makers on where to build new roads, hospitals, childcare and senior citizen centers, schools and more.

Every ten years, Florida gets one chance to take a picture of your community. That snapshot determines ten years worth of investments in the future of your community. By visiting [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov), you can help make sure that everyone in your community is represented in Florida's portrait.



THE PEOPLE'S TRUST IS VIOLATED TOO OFTEN THROUGH ABUSE AND CORRUPTION BY ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHER PUBLIC SERVANTS. I ALSO BELIEVE IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED TO ENSURE THAT STATE LAWS AND BUDGETS ARE WRITTEN IN A DEMOCRATIC MANNER THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH FLORIDA'S GOVERNMENT-IN-THE-SUNSHINE REQUIREMENTS.

## GOOD GOVERNMENT: PROMOTING PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

During the 2010 session, the Legislature considered several important measures to combat public corruption, including a bill to allow for the prosecution of public servants – elected and appointed – who purposefully fail to disclose a financial interest or a future financial benefit. While there is no magic bullet that guarantees government is honest and accountable, a few steps were taken during the 2010 session to expand the arsenal available to the front line prosecutors and investigators fighting those who breach the public's trust.

I wish even more had been accomplished to improve the public's access to state government. And more could have been done this session to restore voter confidence, close loopholes in the elections statutes and protect voters' rights. For one, I am disappointed that a bill did not pass to amend the state constitution

to require budget documents to be user friendly and easier to understand. A proposed constitutional amendment, which I supported, sought to prevent last-minute backroom budget and legislative deals that avoid public input and scrutiny.

I am also disappointed that the Legislature sent to the governor a bill, which thankfully he vetoed, that would have, in my view, impaired the public's ability to track the influence of money in elections. Senate Bill 880 was promoted as an attempt to provide greater transparency in how campaign funds are used and to crack down on shadowy special interests looking to influence Florida's elections. Unfortunately, controversial sections of the bill, I believe, would have concentrated an enormous amount of power into the hands of a few legislative leaders.

## REDISTRICTING TO BE A FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS.

I am proud to have led the debate against House Joint Resolution 7231, a proposed constitutional amendment regarding the establishment of legislative and congressional districts.

If approved by the voters this November, advocates of the constitutional amendment claimed it would clarify questions and legal concerns with Amendments 5 and 6, two initiatives called "FairDistricts" already approved for the November 2010 ballot. But in my view, HJR 7231 isn't necessary and would severely undercut the FairDistricts initiatives, which are placed on the ballot after 1.7 million Floridians signed petitions seeking to reform Florida's controversial reapportionment process.

The constitutional amendments are of critical concern because the 2012 redistricting of legislative and congressional districts could prove pivotal to the long-term political leadership of our state.



## HEALTH CARE 2010

HEALTH CARE FOR FLORIDIANS WAS AMONG MY MAJOR PRIORITIES DURING THE SESSION. THOUGH WE WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR MANY BASIC HEALTH SERVICES DURING A TOUGH BUDGET YEAR, I AM DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED BY CUTS TO PROGRAMS FOR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS.

I am thrilled that legislation was approved to crack down on the corrupt "pill mills" operating around the state. Pain clinics, especially in South Florida, attract patients from all over the country who come to abuse our state's system. To curb this problem, we worked to increase regulation for pain clinics and for physicians who own or work in such clinics. Criminal and financial penalties were added to the law to give law enforcement and prosecutors needed tools to crack down on this growing problem.

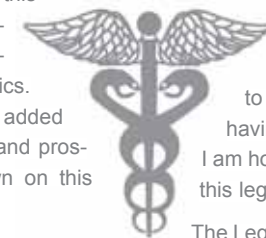
Much of this session's health care discussions, however, focused on some members' desire to block certain requirements under the new federal health care reform law. To my dismay, a proposed constitutional amendment on this issue will appear



on the November ballot.

The topic of women's reproductive rights surfaced in the final days of the session. I opposed a final version of House Bill 1143, which included two controversial components: a statutory ban on health insurance "mandates" and a provision that requires a woman to undergo and view an ultrasound before having an abortion during the first trimester. I am hopeful that Governor Charlie Crist vetoes this legislation.

The Legislature also held a series of discussions regarding a major overhaul of Medicaid. The concept was widely criticized by doctors, hospitals and advocates. The Senate did not take up the legislation.



“EVERY TEN YEARS, FLORIDA GETS ONE CHANCE TO TAKE A PICTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY. THAT SNAPSHOT DETERMINES TEN YEARS WORTH OF INVESTMENTS IN THE FUTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY.”