

## District 88 Update

### From The Florida House Of Representatives



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
MARK PAFFORD

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Dear Friends and Neighbors of House District 88,

Thank you once again for the honor of representing you as your member of the Florida House of Representatives. The work is never easy, but I am proud to be your voice especially in these challenging times for our state.

I am pleased to be home in the district after this difficult session. This year, Floridians reminded me of their concerns regarding the economy, and I took them seriously. I was vocal on issues relating to the middle class, seniors, and children; issues such as health care, unemployment, pensions, and education. However, despite strong arguments by myself and other colleagues, many decisions were made this session without my support.

One of the most challenging topics this year was the debate over how to create a balanced state budget and still address the needs of all of our citizens. There were differing opinions on how to accomplish this task without the federal stimulus dollars that helped us in recent years, and it will be up to the citizens to determine if the legislature was successful in this effort.

I continue to encourage constituents to pay attention to the decisions that affect their future as the legislature responds to Florida's challenges.

I hope you find this legislative update to be a useful source of information. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues or votes, please call my office at 561-682-0156, or send me an email at [mark.pafford@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:mark.pafford@myfloridahouse.gov). And as always, my office is here to assist you, so please feel welcome to contact us.

It is truly a privilege to advocate for our community in the Florida House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Mark Pafford".

MARK PAFFORD  
State Representative  
District 88





## **“Today, more than one million Floridians are out of work.”**

Floridians have endured tough times lately and the economy has presented major challenges for citizens and small businesses. Today, more than one million Floridians are out of work.

I believe reforms may be needed to the state's Unemployment Compensation system, but several revisions by the Legislature did not get my support. The Legislature cut the eligibility period for jobless benefits from 26 weeks to a sliding scale of between 12 and 23 weeks depending on the state's unemployment rate.

Rather than focusing on much-needed improvement to our state's antiquated tax structure and closing tax loopholes, it seems to me the Legislature continued major tax breaks for certain large businesses and the wealthy.

An economic development plan that provides \$126 million in incentives to some businesses was approved. Fortunately, this plan continues a sales tax holiday on clothing, shoes, and school supplies.

## **“...Florida's economic recovery will not be complete until we establish a world-class education system.”**

I believe Florida's economic recovery will not be complete until we establish a world-class education system for students and educators. But that goal will become harder to meet, in my opinion, under this year's state budget and certain bills that passed the Legislature.

Most glaringly, this Legislature significantly cut education funding, authorizing a disappointing 8-percent reduction in per-student funding at public schools.

Raising standards, demanding accountability and offering innovative opportunities are widely supported approaches toward attaining higher student success. But I have found in Tallahassee that often legitimate debates on education reform have become political in tone.

This year, I opposed the creation of a complex new teacher evaluation plan that many educators have said will be detrimental to teaching in Florida. The strategy requires all new teachers in Florida to be evaluated on their effectiveness according to yet-developed measurements that will be based partially on students' FCAT scores.



Legislation also passed that is designed to relax enforcement of the 2002 amendment regarding class size by, among other changes, expanding the list of core courses that are exempt from the class-size limits.



## Overhaul of State Medicaid



## Hospitals & Nursing Homes



## Prescription Drug Abuse

**“Health care... was among my major priorities during the session.”**

Health care for Floridians was among my major priorities during the session and it was a big topic of discussion throughout the session.

A far-reaching overhaul of the state's Medicaid program calls for most Medicaid patients to enroll in managed care plans over the next four years. I am skeptical of whether the federal government will approve such a potentially harmful experiment that will affect the care of millions of low-income Floridians and seniors.

Under the Medicaid legislation, the state will be carved into 11 regions where managed-care plans are expected to compete for contracts and build networks of doctors, hospitals and other health providers. Implementation will cost the state millions of dollars, and I fear taxpayers will lose accountability when for-profit private insurance companies take over.

Meanwhile, the Legislature provided funding this year for many basic health care services, but I am disappointed by cuts to programs for vulnerable residents. Hospitals and nursing homes, for example, will see nearly \$700 million in cuts.

In trying to ease the financial pinch on nursing homes, the Legislature has reduced a nursing-home staffing requirement that was intended to improve resident care. Each resident would have to receive a weekly average of 3.6 hours of direct care each day, down from the current 3.9 hours. I am concerned this move will reduce the quality of care in nursing homes.

I supported an effort to clamp down on prescription drug abuse. Legislation will increase penalties for unscrupulous doctors and take other steps to rid Florida of its reputation as a deadly pill-mill capital. By prohibiting doctors from dispensing medically unbelievable amounts of the most dangerous drugs, I hope we have given law enforcement the help they need to quickly and effectively put an end to the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in Florida.



## Important Hurricane Telephone Numbers

**Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management:**  
**(561) 712-6400**

**Hearing Impaired (TTY/TTD):**  
**(561) 712-6343**

**American Red Cross Greater Palm Beach Area Chapter:**  
**(561) 833-7711**

**Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department:**  
**(561) 688-3000 (non-emergency)**

**School District of Palm Beach County:**  
**(561) 434-8000**

**Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control:**  
**(561) 233-1200**

**Disabled Transportation Assistance:**  
**(561) 649-9848**

**Special Needs Shelter/ Emergency Medical Services:**  
**(561) 712-6400**

**FL Department of Financial Services Hurricane Helpline: (800) 227-8676**

**Report power outages to FPL: 1-800-468-8243. Residents with questions before, during and after a hurricane should call 211.**



**“I believe certain components of the legislation will suppress voter turnout, especially among college students.”**

Participation in elections is a hallmark of a strong democracy, and several bills approved by the Florida Legislature address the topics of voter participation, campaign financing and how citizens influence our government.

Without my support, a massive elections-law rewrite was pushed through the Legislature. The contentious elections bill deals with everything from the date of the presidential preference primary to a reduction in the number of early voting days authorized under the law.

I believe certain components of the legislation will suppress voter turnout, especially among college students.

The Legislature also approved new prohibitions on how citizens impact government. Under a bill that passed, citizens will get half the time now allowed to collect signatures for amending the state constitution. Instead of the current four-year period, signatures will have to be collected within two years.

Meanwhile, the Legislature gave itself more power to contend with court challenges to constitutional amendments drawn by lawmakers. Under this new bill, the Legislature can now offer up multiple ballot summaries for legislatively proposed constitutional amendments, and should all the summaries be rejected, the Attorney General can draw up a new ballot summary.

To my dismay, legislative leaders (including the House Speaker, Senate President and the leaders of minority parties) can now establish new campaign funds under a controversial bill originally passed in 2010. That bill was vetoed by Governor Crist but the Legislature voted to reverse the veto in 2011.

I remain concerned that these election law changes will erode trust in government and fail to significantly limit special-interest influence on our political system.

**To subscribe to Rep. Pafford's monthly email newsletter, please send an email to [mark.pafford@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:mark.pafford@myfloridahouse.gov) and type "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line.**