



District 39

2008 Legislative Update



Greetings

from



Representative

Thompson



Volume 2, Issue 2
May 2008

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Important Legislative Dates

Dear Friend,

Recently, you should have received a copy of the 2007 Legislative Update and the accomplishments of my first year in office as your state representative. This current newsletter now provides you with my activity during my second year.

As you are aware, the Florida Legislature faced a difficult budget process this year. Due to a national recession and a significant decrease in sales taxes paid to the State, there was far less money for many worthy projects and programs. The deficit is now reported to be in excess of \$6 billion dollars. The people of Florida desperately need a detailed plan to combat these budget cuts that are causing our communities and our schools to suffer. It is my belief that the very opportunities that are being derailed are the very opportunities that will allow Florida to bounce back from recession. You can read more about the budget that passed in this newsletter.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me as your voice in the legislature, I will continue to work to preserve the funding for essential programs such as health care, higher education, K-12, and public safety.

You may also contact Representative Thompson at Geraldine.Thompson@myfloridahouse.gov

Thompson's \$1.8 Million Claims Bill for Pitbull Victim

Approved
by Legislature



On March 4, 2003, Daniel Decembre, then a 3rd grader at Ridgewood Park Elementary, was attacked when a 50 pound pit bull bolted through the open gates of the school and pounced on him. Daniel fought the dog by himself for several minutes. It was only when a group of people noticed Daniel's plight and hit the pit bull with umbrellas, that the dog stopped biting him. Daniel's injuries were extensive, so much so that he had to be airlifted to the hospital. He lost an ear and his left eye is so damaged that he can no longer see out of it. The family's insurance plan dropped Daniel, shortly after the incident occurred. Daniel's parents, Desnar and Mignone Decembre, filed a lawsuit against the Orange County School Board for negligent treatment of Daniel while he was on Orange County property. Prior to trial, the Orange County School Board agreed to pay \$2 million dollars in a settlement for the injuries suffered by Daniel. Florida sovereign immunity law will only allow the school board to pay \$200,000 of the settlement to the family. The law also requires that the remaining \$1.8 million must meet

the approval of the Florida House of Representatives, the Florida Senate and Florida's Governor. Representative Thompson filed the claims bill in the House of Representatives. "When the claims bill was brought to me for sponsorship, I was honored to have the opportunity to help Daniel and his family advocate for justice," says Representative Thompson. On April 23, 2008, Thompson presented the claims bill to the Schools and Learning Council of the Florida House of Representatives. The council voted unanimously (16-0) to authorize payment to the Decembre family. After being amended, the claims bill passed in the House of Representatives on May 1 and then in the Florida Senate on May 2. Daniel's bill was signed by Governor Crist on May 19, 2008. Meanwhile, Daniel, now 13, seeks to move on although he is still teased by

other students about his appearance. When asked what his future plans are, Daniel replies that he wants to become a reconstructive surgeon so he can help those who have deficiencies get back to a normal life. Thompson commented, "Money will not eliminate all the physical and mental damage that has been done to Daniel, but this award should help alleviate some of the strain that his family has had to endure. This will hopefully aid him on the path to recovery."



The Decembre Family

Thompson's Bill Would Assist Foreclosure Victims

With the Nation in a recession and property taxes skyrocketing, many homeowners in the state of Florida are struggling when it comes to their mortgage payments. Currently, Florida ranks 2nd in the Nation in foreclosures. Addressing this crisis, Representative Thompson filed HB 895, an act relating to judicial sale of property which has been foreclosed on. Subprime lending, the practice of providing a loan which is above the prime or normal rate of interest, has caused many foreclosures. The legislation would have provided that if a loan is found to meet the criteria of being considered "subprime," then a

homeowner would be given a minimum of 110 days before that property could be sold. While Thompson's legislation did not pass, she is glad to have had the chance to sponsor legislation which addresses the concerns of her constituents.



Thompson in Tallahassee

2008 Photo Gallery



Rep. Thompson stands with women of the House of Representatives on opening day of 2008 Session.



Rep. Betty Reed (Tampa) and Rep. Maria Sachs (Palm Beach) share a moment with Rep. Thompson.



Rep. Thompson and Rep. Terry Fields (Jacksonville) stand to recognize Senator Arnett Girardeau, the first African American after Reconstruction to serve in the Florida Senate.



Chelsea Costin, who served as a Page to Rep. Thompson during the 2008 Session, visits with Rep. Thompson.



Seeking broad based support for her claims bill, Rep. Thompson visits with Rep. Jennifer Carroll (Avon Park) and Rep. Debbie Boyd (High Springs).



Rep. Thompson congratulates Heisman Trophy Winner, Tim Tebow, for his academic and athletic achievements.



State Funds Will Benefit District 39's Lake Wekiva River

For the second straight year, Florida's \$66.2 billion budget included a District 39 project which will improve the water quality for residents in District 39. The Lake Wekiva River Quality Improvement Initiative, sponsored by Representative Geraldine Thompson, received \$1 million to continue addressing the high levels of nutrients which have had a negative impact on area lakes and posed a risk to human health and safety. The project was begun to proactively address this issue. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and local partners have developed a project that would create a series of

systems to treat direct stormwater run-off, during periods of low flow (dry season) it will remove water from Lake Wekiva and other lakes and circulate it through treatment systems before returning the water to the lake. "I am honored to say that even with the strain of having less money to budget, my colleagues and I have chosen to continue the commitment to this very good project." The project was sent to Governor Crist for his approval. Residents of District 39 should urge Governor Crist to support the project by contacting the Governor's Citizen Services Hotline at 850-488-4441.

Black Caucus Responds to Slavery Apology



Members of the Black Caucus

On Wednesday, March 26, 2008, several Florida House members sat with tears in their eyes. Former House of Representative Clerk, John Pelphs detailed some of the brutal and inhumane Florida laws passed by the state's legislature as early as 1822. Phelps detailed laws which required that "any Negro, bond or free," convicted of giving false testimony would have "his or her ears nailed to posts and there stand for one hour, and moreover, receive 39 lashes on his or her bare back." Afterwards, members of the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators held a press conference to speak out about making the resolution more than just a symbol.

Black Caucus chairman, Rep. Joe Gibbons (D-Broward), surrounded by other members of the Black Caucus, made comments to the press. "Yes, this is a historical moment for the legislature, but the real question is what happens next." Representative Geraldine F. Thompson, a historian, also focused on the present condition of African Americans. "An apology is great and to express regret is good, but how do we move forward to open up opportunities for people here and now?" said Rep. Thompson. The resolution was approved unanimously by a voice vote. Legislators were not given the opportunity to make remarks on the resolution, which included no mention of reparations. Passage of the resolution made Florida the sixth state in the U.S. to formally apologize for the wrongs of slavery.

Black Caucus News!



Each year, the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators awards scholarships to worthy high school seniors to help them to attend college. A total of \$2,000 is available for students in the District 39 area. Applicants may contact State Rep. Geraldine Thompson's office at 407-245-1511 for further information regarding the scholarship. Applicants must attach an official high school transcript and prepare a 500 word essay along with the application. The deadline to submit applications in July 1, 2008.

YOUR Representative In YOUR District



Thompson and others at opening of Main Street Orlando



Thompson and other dignitaries at Frontline charity benefit for children



Thompson, Rev. Al Sharpton and other dignitaries at James R. Smith Center rally.



Thompson with Mayor Buddy Dyer and Brian Butler at the Wells' Built Museum

Thompson Supports the Hate Crimes Legislation

On Thursday, March 20, 2008, Representative Geraldine Thompson and Senator Larcenia Bullard (Senate District 39) met with local and national media outlets regarding their hate crimes legislations. Both bills would penalize persons for the public display of a noose or swastika when those displays were made with the intent to put the victim in fear. Thompson and Bullard came together to sponsor the bill due to the increasing number of incidences of hate crimes in the state of Florida. One such incident occurred in Pembroke Pines, Florida, where an African American teen who wrote a Black History book report, had a noose placed at her lunch table. Both lawmakers invited the teen and her family to come to Tallahassee and speak to the media about how this incident, considered by a young man as a joke, had effected their lives. At the press conference, Thompson proclaimed, "We will not stand for this type of intimidation of young people in our schools by the use of these hate symbols." Thompson and Bullard organized the press conference to urge House and Senate Leadership and the committee chairmen to add the bills to their respective agendas. The press conference received local, state and National coverage. Yet, Thompson's and Bullard's pleas to have the bill heard were ignored. "Regardless of the outcome this year, I will continue to work towards maintaining safe schools for all of Florida's children," said Thompson.



Thompson speaks to media and supporters of HB 307 on Hate Crimes

Information You Need In YOUR Community New Medicare-Covered Equipment & Supplies Program

Starting in July 2008, new Medicare guidelines take effect. The new program will begin on July 1, 2008 in 10 communities around the country, including Orlando, FL. People with Medicare who live in or travel to Orlando with a prescription for any of the items listed below must now get equipment or supplies from a Medicare-contracted supplier. Beneficiaries will need to find out which suppliers are Medicare contract suppliers to make sure their medical products and services will be covered by Medicare. Patients can find out if a supplier is included in the program by visiting www.medicare.gov or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE.

- (1) Oxygen supplies and equipment;
- (2) Standard power wheelchairs, scooters and related accessories;
- (3) Complex rehabilitative power wheelchairs and related accessories;
- (4) Mail-order diabetic supplies;
- (5) Enteral nutrients, equipment, and supplies;
- (6) Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) devices and Respiratory Assist Devices (RADs) and related supplies;
- (7) Hospital beds and related accessories;
- (8) Negative pressure wound therapy pumps and related supplies and accessories;
- (9) Walkers and related accessories; and
- (10) Support surfaces including group 2 mattresses and overlays (some available only in selected areas).



"The Times Have Changed" Legislators Pass New State Anthem

The State of Florida has a new official anthem. "Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky" has been designated as the official state anthem after being selected during a statewide competition to choose a new song. Senate Bill 1558 keeps "The Old folks at Home" (also known as "Swanee River") as the official state song but updates some of the outdated and controversial lyrics. In support of the new anthem and revisions to the old tune, Rep. Thompson, a co-sponsor of the House bill, urged her colleagues to embrace the new song. "Florida has changed," she said. "The demographics have changed. The times have changed."

The Florida House of Representatives

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Healthcare Comes into Focus for 2008 and Beyond



Due to the voices of people throughout the state on the issue of healthcare, Rep. Thompson has decided to make it a top priority this year. Recently, Rep. Thompson had the opportunity to discuss healthcare with United States Senators Hillary Clinton (New York) and Barack Obama (Illinois) during trips Florida.



Her discussions with both senators, led to her decision to the first annual District 39 Adolescent and Family Health Fair which will take place on June 21, 2008 at Lake Eola in Orlando, Florida from 10am until 2pm. attendees will receive blood pressure and diabetes checks in addition to eye and dental screenings. The event is free and open to the public.

Save the Date

June 21, 2008
Youth & Family
Adolescent Health Fair
10am-2pm at Lake Eola

July 1, 2008
Effective Date for
Most Bills

September 2008
House Interim
Committee Meetings

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