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Florida House Propose School Safety in the Wake of Parkland Tragedy

What transpired last week in Parkland, when an armed gunman entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and took the lives of 17 innocent Floridians, was a heartbreaking tragedy. In an effort to ensure this never happens again, the Florida House has proposed a comprehensive plan to address this issue.

Sections of the proposal deal with the issues of firearm safety, school security, inter-agency information sharing and coordination, mental health, and victim's privacy. This proposal is the result of numerous conversations across the aisle and with constituents. Additionally, this proposal includes a mandate for in-depth investigations into every facet of this issue in order to find out what went wrong and how it could have been prevented. It is our duty to protect our citizens, and I promise that when it comes to keeping Florida's children safe, no issue is too big or complex.

House Passes Bill to Reform Trade Secrets Law

Recently, numerous agencies have been in the spotlight for unjustified spending of taxpayer money while attempting to hide behind public records exemptions for trade secrets. I believe the citizens of Florida have a right to know about where, how, and under what terms their tax dollars are being spent.

This week, the House passed HB 459 and HB 461, which aims to bring clarity when handling trade secrets by creating a uniform definition of "trade secret" and a uniform process for handling trade secrets. The definition clearly specifies information that does not constitute a trade secret, and the uniform process provides clear direction to agencies when responding to public records requests for records that contain information claimed to be a trade secret.

I support holding government agencies accountable and I believe these agencies should disclose exactly how they are spending taxpayer dollars. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House Passes Criminal Justice Data Reform

This week, the Florida House of Representatives passed HB 7071 that expands the collection of criminal justice data, and brings uniformity to the data across the state. Unfortunately, the existing data collection process is either inconsistent across agencies and departments or lacking crucial information. As a result, we have been flying blind while attempting to implement criminal justice reforms.

This bill will bring Florida to the forefront of the nation in terms of criminal justice data collection. This will help us locate and diagnose trends in crime and law enforcement, while bringing unprecedented insights into policymaking. By collecting accurate, valid, and reliable data, we can accurately tailor future



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

crime prevention legislation, creating a pathway to a safer Florida. The bill will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

Florida House Passes School District Accountability Bill

This week, the Florida House passed HB 1279, which increases fiscal accountability and transparency of school districts by requiring budget and spending information to be provided in a manner that allows the public to see how and where school districts spend tax dollars. The bill also requires school districts to correct deficiencies in financial and operational audits in a timely manner and requires school board members to be more vigilant in the prevention of financial emergencies

I believe this bill ensures that our state's public schools use your tax dollars in the most efficient and effective way possible. I am proud to support legislation that gives Florida's taxpayers the transparency and accountability they deserve from their elected officials. The bill now heads to the Senate for their consideration.

Government Accountability Committee Combats Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

There is no place in our capital city, our state, or the workplace for unacceptable and unwanted behavior. This week, the Government Accountability Committee approved the bill which will bring the toughest rules against sexual harassment in the nation.

Never again should one's job title or position of power shield them from accountability for this disgusting behavior. We must protect the dignity of victims and witnesses, and ensure they will not be bullied or intimidated. It is time for the culture of corruption and silence on this issue to end and people to be held accountable. The bill will now go to the House Floor for the consideration of the full House of Representatives.

The Government Accountability Committee Passes Bill to Increase Budget Transparency

This week, the Government Accountability Committee advanced HB 7057 to address transparency in, and access to, the operating budgets of state entities. Currently, state agencies are required to submit their operating budget and budget requests to the Legislature for the upcoming year through the State budget. However, some state entities are not reliant on the state budget, and thus, their budgets are not subject to the same scrutiny.

This bill requires any statewide entity created by law or the State Constitution and that is controlled or operated by the Governor or the Governor and members of the Cabinet, or is related to a department of state government, to follow specific steps that provide transparency if the entity receives its operating income through a funding source other than through the state budget. The operating budget must be approved at a publicly noticed meeting and must be available on the entity's website at the time the meeting is noticed. Once approved, the operating budget must be submitted to the chairs of the legislative appropriation committees and the Executive Office of the Governor by July 1 of each year. The bill also requires operating budget information to be posted to the state entity's website.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

I believe that without transparency and accountability in our government, we will never be able to secure and maintain the public's trust. This bill ensures that trust by guaranteeing all budgets of these entities are available to the public. I support this bill because I believe Floridians have the right to know where and how their tax dollars are being spent.

Florida House Appropriations Committee Passes Florida First Tax Package Proposal

This week the Appropriations Committee passed HB 7087, the 2018 Tax Cut Package Proposal that will put the needs of Floridians first and foremost.

The committee passed a bill to cut taxes for millions of Floridians. Under this tax package, families and students, business owners, farmers, military and servicemembers, and others will receive a tax cut from the Florida House. The following are some highlights of the tax package proposal I am proud to support:

- Helps make education more affordable with a ten-day **Back-to-School Holiday**
- Prioritizes new funding for the **Gardiner Scholarship Programs** and expands funding for the **Florida Tax Credit Scholarship**
- Reduces the **Business Rent Tax** for businesses
- Provides relief to farmers with the **Hurricane Irma or Citrus Greening Property Tax Reduction, Fuel Tax Exemption, Hurricane Reconstruction Tax Exemption (Building and Fencing Materials)**
- Protects Florida's families and homes from natural disasters with the **Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, Generators for Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities, and Homestead Property Relief**
- Honors the 1.6 million veterans and their families in Florida with updates to **Veteran-specific Ad Valorem Exemptions**
- **Preempts** any local government from prohibiting sale of or offering the sale of tangible personal property that is subject to a sales tax

This bill makes a substantial contribution to improve the prosperity and opportunity for all Floridians. I strongly support this bill because it puts Floridians first.

Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Passes Opioid Bill

This week, the House Health & Human Services Committee passed HB 21 to target the opioid crisis affecting our nation and state.

Opioid addiction has been recognized as a public health emergency on both federal and state level. Drug overdoses have steadily increased and now represent the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., the majority of which involve an opioid. In our state, heroin caused 952 deaths, oxycodone caused 723 deaths, and hydrocodone caused 245 deaths in 2016.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

HB 21 addresses opioid abuse by increasing regulation of prescribers and dispensers, expanding the use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) and aligning state criminal statutes with federal law. A few new key provisions include exceptions to the definition of acute pain to include cancer, terminal illness, palliative care, and serious traumatic injury. The latter must be co-prescribed with an emergency opioid antagonist that rapidly reverses the effects of an opioid. Additionally, a health care practitioner who fails to consult the system as required is issued a non-disciplinary citation for the first offense and is subject to licensure action each time thereafter.

I strongly support the efforts of the Florida House to pass policies that will bring a resolution to opioid addiction and suffering. This crisis requires all of us to take a stand and help our family, friends, and community. If you would like more information on this bill please contact our office. If you or someone you know is suffering with an opioid addiction please contact 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

House Appropriations Committee Passes Bill to Strengthen Florida's Emergency Management Laws

This week, the Appropriations Committee passed HB 7083, which revises various provisions relating to the state's comprehensive emergency management plan and emergency management readiness and response in Florida that will help our state greatly during the next storm.

Some of the bill's provisions include: extending the number of days state employees can be authorized leave during an emergency from 15 to 20 days; requiring county emergency management plans to include a fuel contingency plan and to provide detailed information on shelters; and prohibiting a public entity from holding a public meeting during a declared state of emergency while a curfew is imposed to discuss or vote on its budget. The bill also directs the Florida Department of Transportation, railroad industries, and fuel industries to collaborate and create a study examining options to use railroads as a means to transport and store fuel to areas impacted by a hurricane.

This bill ensures our state is properly prepared for emergencies and any minor, major, or catastrophic disaster. I support this bill and pledge to continue to fight to keep Florida strong in times of natural disasters.

Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Passes Public Assistance Reforms

This week the Health & Human Services Committee passed HB 751, which addresses matters relating to Public Assistance, to implement new work requirements for Medicaid recipients.

The bill directs the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to seek federal approval for work requirements in the Medicaid program. New federal policy guidance indicates such a request would be approved, if state proposals focus on working age, non-pregnant, non-disabled Medicaid recipients, and take into consideration recipients who are caregivers for young children or elderly family members or who live in high unemployment areas. This would align the Medicaid work requirements with those for the food stamp and cash assistance programs, to streamline the eligibility process and take advantage of federally-funded workforce assistance.



If AHCA obtains federal approval, the work requirements would come back to the Legislature for consideration.

Your Florida House is dedicated to passing legislation that will ensure Floridians are encouraged and prepared for the workforce.

House Committee Passes Bill to Crackdown on Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Government

This week, the Government Accountability Committee passed HB 7073, dealing with government integrity. This bill will enhance government integrity by implementing mechanisms to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse. These mechanisms include creating a permanent, professional office within the Office of the Auditor General for the purpose of identifying, investigating, and recommending the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement and related misconduct in government.

Additionally, the bill broadens Florida's Whistle-Blower Act, ensures state agencies reward employees when they report waste, fraud, and abuse and their complaints result in savings for the state, strengthens the state procurement law, and much more. The bill also allows the Chief Financial Officer's office to commence a fraud investigation based on a complaint or referral from an employee of a state agency or state contractor. Furthermore, the bill prohibits state or local tax incentive funds from being used to award or pay a state contractor or subcontractor for services provided or expenditures incurred pursuant to a state contract.

We have shown our commitment to bringing the people of Florida the most effective, efficient, and transparent government possible. The bill will now go to the House Floor for the consideration of the full House of Representatives.

Florida House Health & Human Services Committee Passes Bill Addressing Self-Sufficiency

The Health & Human Services Committee passed an important pro-family bill that makes changes to Florida's Temporary Cash Assistance Program (TCA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to encourage families to be self-sufficient: HB 693.

About 3.3 million Floridians currently receive food assistance through SNAP. HB 693 ends a change to SNAP made in 2010 during the devastating economic downturn. That change helped more people qualify for food assistance in that tough time. Fortunately, our economy has improved since then— for example, the state's unemployment rate has fallen from 11.4% to 3.6%.

Under the bill, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) must seek federal approval to implement a resource limit of \$5,000 in counted assets. The bill also requires DCF to verify assets to prevent errors and fraud. The asset limit and verification will help ensure that assistance goes to those who are truly in need.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

The bill also creates pilot programs at three or more regional workforce boards to increase employment opportunities for TCA recipients who face significant barriers to employment. Creating these pilot programs will help TCA recipients become “work ready” and support their families.

I believe encouraging families to be self-sufficient is something we can all get behind, and that is exactly what this bill would do.