



THE MAYFIELD MINUTE

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Empowering Taxpayers</i>	2
<i>Protecting Free Speech</i>	2
<i>Streamlining Permitting</i>	2
<i>Federal Stimulus</i>	3
<i>Preserving Core Missions</i>	3

Greetings from Tallahassee! There's just one week left in the 2009 Regular Session and my colleagues and I are working hard to pass bills that are essential to promoting Florida's economic recovery. Last week we passed our budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year, and I am confident that it is a strong budget that will help Florida through this economic downturn. It is my wish that next week we finish conferencing on the budget and continue to pass legislation that is in the interest to the people of Florida.

-Rep. Debbie Mayfield

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Representative Mayfield and students from the Liberty Magnet Elementary School in front of the Capitol building in Tallahassee.

ENDING "DOUBLE DIPPING"

I have always valued the hard work and dedication of our state employees. All too often, their dedicated service to the state goes unrecognized and like all Floridians, they are also feeling the effects of the economic downturn. Unfortunately, the current retirement system includes a loophole which increases costs for the government and Florida taxpayers. Under the current system, a state employee can retire and return to work in 30 days while collecting retirement benefits and a state salary at the same time. This costly loophole needed to be closed. To that end, the House took a significant step toward increasing government accountability by passing House Bill 479, of which I am a cosponsor. This bill extends the period of time state employees must stay in retirement to six months or requires them to forfeit their pension. It also prohibits renewed enrollment, meaning state employees cannot accrue a new pension in addition to the original pension they already earned.



Florida's Old and New Capitols

If you have any issues, questions, or concerns, please feel free to contact our district secretary, Bethany Fretwell, at (772) 778-5077 or toll-free at (866) 957-7289.

For more detailed information on legislative issues, please check out the Florida Legislature's website!
www.myfloridahouse.gov



EMPOWERING TAXPAYERS

Last Tuesday, the House Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council unanimously passed House Bill 971, known as the Florida Transparency Act. This legislation will allow citizens to track their tax dollars online and will be the strongest legislation of its kind in the nation. The website would provide information on the date, amount, and source of every expenditure, affording Floridians an unprecedented level of access to information on government spending. Underscoring this legislation is our fundamental belief that every dollar the government spends is a dollar out of your pocket and you should have the tool to know how your money is being spent.

PROVIDING CHOICE TO HOMEOWNERS

Florida's homeowners face a difficult challenge in choosing their homeowners' insurance policy in an increasingly less-competitive Florida insurance market. Too often, Floridians are left with few choices to insure the largest investment they will make in their lives. I found this situation to be counterproductive to energizing Florida's economy. To address this issue, the House overwhelmingly approved House Bill 1171 this week. House Bill 1171 puts the power to make insurance choices back into the hands of the consumer. While providing for necessary consumer protections, House Bill 1171 allows the consumer to make insurance choices and encourages a sustainable and competitive private insurance market. I trust Floridians, armed with all of the relevant information, can make the best decision for their residential property insurance policy and company.

PROTECTING FREE SPEECH

Freedom of speech is a right we, as Americans and Floridians, hold very dear. To underscore my belief in the fundamental right to freedom of speech, I supported House Bill 949 that protects Floridians from libel lawsuits filed in foreign courts, often by individuals with ties to organizations like al Qaeda and Hamas. The measure will help in the fight against a tactic known as "Libel Tourism." I am pleased that the measure supports both freedom of speech and freedom of the press while helping to fight terrorism by closing a loophole in the law which gave shadow groups a cash cow to fund their activities.

STREAMLINING GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Intelligent, common-sense growth will play an important role in recharging Florida's economy. To create incentives that will promote responsible development in urban areas and reduce sprawl, the House passed House Bill 7127 this week. House Bill 7127 strikes a balance between state and local control of growth management by retaining state regulatory oversight of planning and development processes, while recognizing the role and responsibility of local elected officials to make land use decisions in the best interests of their local community. Additionally, local oversight leads to more responsible environmental controls over growth.

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FEDERAL STIMULUS

On April 15th, millions of Americans filed their federal tax returns. It is this money that comprises the federal stimulus sent to the states by Washington. We recognize that the federal stimulus funds are not “free” money but rather the product of hard work and sacrifice by real people in Florida and across America. With that in mind, the House has used federal stimulus dollars thoughtfully and responsibly. Likewise, we realize that these federal dollars are not a silver bullet to solving Florida’s budget problems. The state’s budget problems will only be solved by strengthening Florida’s economy and helping create jobs for Floridians.



Chip Landers, Karl Zimmerman, Jose Marrero, Lois Work, Maria Cioffi-Fulchini, Lauren Connolly, Carol Eisenmann, Carol Hawk, Judy Landgrave, Mike Lafferty, Tom LaRocca, Troy Greenawalt, Adam Preuss, and Rafael Ospina of the Realtors Association of Indian River County in Tallahassee with Rep. Mayfield

PROTECTING CITIZENS’ CUSTOMERS

Florida homeowners are arguably hit the hardest when it comes to the rising cost of insurance. This is particularly true for those insured by Citizens Property Insurance, the state insurer. To help alleviate this situation, the House passed House Bill 1495 which will prevent drastic rate increases for Citizens customers. Without this bill, on January 1, 2010, Citizens’ customers will likely face dramatic overall average statewide rate increases - in excess of 40% for personal residential multi-peril policies, 55% for personal residential wind-only policies, 60% for commercial residential wind-only policies and 140% for commercial nonresidential properties. This bill lowers rates of increase for Citizens policyholders in anticipation of the mandated expiration of the rate freeze.

PRESERVING CORE MISSIONS

House Members are constitutionally mandated to balance the budget. Over the course of the Session, we have reviewed the state budget line-by-line and have examined state government spending to make sure that we are focusing on the core missions of government and finding ways to make government more efficient and effective. The House of Representatives accomplished this in the face of an unprecedented \$6.4 billion deficit.