

Florida Legislative Issues

Day 39 of 60. Over halfway there! Even though there are roughly as many days ahead as there are behind us now, after the midway point of the Session things always seem to pick up speed. Every minute in committee or on the Floor is precious because there are hundreds of issues trying to be heard before the clock expires.

This week was a slower week as both Chambers took off Monday, Tuesday, & Friday for the holidays. In the short time that they did meet this week however they passed their proposed budgets and stayed on schedule for the budget conference to start.

The House passed an \$81.2 billion budget by a vote of 89 to 26. That is roughly \$1.1 billion less than the current Budget. The Senate unanimously passed an \$85.1 billion budget, a 3 % increase from the current year.

So there is roughly \$4 billion to be negotiated give or take a \$100 million here or there. Included in this gap, the House and Senate disagree over:

- Over property taxes
 - The House wants to reduce local property tax rates for education so they stay flat. The Senate wants to maintain the rate but as property values increase, residents pay more.
- Education programs
 - House K-12 is \$7,224 per student
 - Senate K-12 is \$7,414 per student
- State workers' salaries
- Environmental projects and economic development agencies
 - The Senate is pushing for \$1.5 billion for a reservoir South of Lake Okeechobee
 - The Senate has included \$85 million for Enterprise Florida.

VISIT Florida funding

As you probably heard, and as we expected, the House has proposed \$25 million for VISIT Florida and the Senate has proposed maintaining the budget at the current level.