2001 Special Session "B"
Summary of Legislation Passed

Compiled and Edited by
Office of the Senate Secretary

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Table of Contents

CS/SB 2-B — Appropriations; Provides Appropriations and Reductions in Appropriations for FY 2001-2002

by Appropriations Committee and Senator Carlton

This bill provides appropriations and reductions in appropriations for FY 2001-2002, to pay salaries, and other expenses, capital outlay – buildings, and other improvements, and for other specified purposes of the various agencies of State government.

Total funds appropriated in the General Appropriations Act: $195.1 Million

EDUCATION

Public Schools

- Reduces the immediate impact of budget reductions affecting the FEFP and major categorical programs to only 0.9 percent ($118.2 million). The total FEFP reduction of $347.2 million is offset by the use of non-recurring funds ($229.4 million). CS/SB 20-B provides school districts flexible use of FEFP categorical funds to assist them to accommodate the reductions.

- Appropriations affecting the state's accountability program (e.g., Assessment and Evaluation and the Excellent Teaching Program) are protected from reduction with the use of non-recurring funds.

- Categorical funding in the State Grants – FEFP budget for Teacher Recruitment and Retention ($152 million) and Teacher Lead ($15.4 million) is shifted from recurring to non-recurring and will, therefore, be eliminated from the FY 2002-2003 base budget. Since funds appropriated for FY 2001-2002 for those programs have already been spent, FY 2001-2002 appropriations are unaffected by reductions. Funding for other major FEFP categorical programs (e.g., Student Transportation and Instructional Materials) is reduced by 6.24 percent.

- Eliminates appropriations for new programs if funds appropriated have not been spent. Reduces funding for most appropriations in the State Grants – Non-FEFP budget and the Educational Media and Technology budget by the 20 percent amount recommended by the agency in its FY 2002-2003 5 percent reduction plan.

- If a program's appropriation for FY 2001-2002 was greater than its FY 2000-2001 appropriation, reduces the appropriation base consistent with recommendations included in the agency's 5 percent reduction plan for FY 2002-2003 (a 20 percent reduction) and eliminates the amount of the increase provided for FY 2001-2002.

- Reduces the FY 2002-2003 base budget for Salaries and Benefits in the Executive Direction and Support budget by 25 percent and all other administrative appropriations by 6.24 percent.

Community Colleges

- Reduces the FY 2002-2003 General Revenue base budget by 6.24 percent (the same reduction applied to the state university system budgets) and reduces the FY 2001-2002 budget by a net 4.6 percent.

- Reduces the recurring General Revenue appropriation for the Community College Program Fund by 6.03 percent. The effective reduction for FY 2001-2002 is 3.3 percent after adding back non-recurring funds.

- Reduces appropriations for most other appropriations that pass through to the colleges by 6.24 percent.

- Reduces the appropriation for the new High Demand Return on Investment categorical and most other new programs by 50 percent. Those reduction funds are transferred to the Community College Program Fund.

State University System

- Reduces the FY 2002-2003 General Revenue base budget by 6.24 percent (the same reduction applied to the community college budget).

- In an effort to lessen the impact on classroom instruction, applies less than 1 percent reductions to the Educational and General Lump Sum and to the Branch Campuses and Centers Lump Sum.

- Eliminates recurring funding increases provided for FY 2001-2002 for non-instructional new or expanded programs, and shifts 50 percent of those amounts to non-recurring funds.

- Reduces funding for additional access to medical education and legal education degree programs by 6.24 percent.

- Eliminates funding for Targeted Baccalaureate Degrees ($5 million). Reduces the $1 million specifically appropriated to St. Petersburg College by 6.24 percent, which is the same reduction applied to all other academic programs.

- Eliminates the earmark for Undergraduate and Graduate Fee Waivers, but provides flexibility by allowing universities to use funds provided in the Education and General appropriation to provide scholarships or to waive fees.

- Applies 6.24 percent reductions to all other line item appropriations.

Private Colleges and Universities

- Shifts $2.3M for Academic Program Contracts to non-recurring.

- Reduces all remaining line item appropriations by 6.24 percent, except for Spinal Cord Research and Bimini Biological Field Station. Reduces appropriations for those programs by 50 percent, transfers those amounts to non-recurring funds, and reduces funding for FRAG by 4.2 percent.

Student Financial Aid

- Eliminates funding for Bright Futures scholarships for the 2002 summer term only.

- Applies 6.24 percent reductions to all administrative appropriations.

- Applies 6.24 percent reductions to FSAG and other scholarships, effective July 1, 2002.

Workforce Development

- Reduces the FY 2002-2003 recurring General Revenue base budget by 6.24 percent and reduces the FY 2001-2002 budget by a net 5 percent.

- Reduces recurring General Revenue appropriations for Workforce Development Grants distributed to school districts and community colleges by 6.04 percent.

- Reduces appropriations for new programs and programs which had not yet been allocated by 50 percent.

Vocational Rehabilitation

- Reduces the appropriation base for FY 2002-2003 by 6.24 percent and reduces the FY 2001-2002 budget by 1.8 percent.

- Reduces funds that count as federal match by 6.24 percent. Additional funds will be lost if there is a reduction in matching funds.

Blind Services

- Reduces the FY 2002-2003 base budget for General Revenue appropriations by 2.25 percent and reduces the FY 2001-2002 budget for General Revenue by a net 1.3 percent.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Health and human services programs were reduced a total of $169.2 million in state and federal funds. This reduction is a net amount of the total reduction because it reflects restorations of certain programs with non-recurring funds to enable programs to operate through June 30, 2002. These restorations will allow critical Medicaid services to chronically ill individuals and to pregnant women to continue for the rest of this fiscal year. The net reduction in General Revenue was $147 million and there was a net increase in the use of Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund dollars of $30 million.

Funding reductions for the Health and Human Services departments include:

Agency for Health Care Administration

- Funding was reduced by $104.3 million ($56.5 million in state funds). Reductions in FY 2001-2002 were restored with nonrecurring funds for adults under the Medically Needy Program, pregnant women between 150 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level, and Adult Dental, Visual, and Hearing Services to allow continued coverage through June 30, 2002. These programs will be eliminated on July 1, 2002 unless the programs are justified and funding is restored by the 2002 Legislature.

- Several reductions were made to **Medicaid reimbursement rates**. The MediPass case management fee was reduced from $3 to $2 for a total reduction of $3.8 million and $2.2 million was reduced for a 1 percent physician rate reduction. The following reductions were made to rate increases that have not yet been implemented: $2.2 million to eliminate the 4 percent physician rate increase for services to children that was effective April 1, 2002; and $1.5 million to eliminate the 11 percent rate increase for home health visits by licensed nurses and the 13 percent increase for visits by home health aides that was effective January 1, 2002. An additional $0.8 million was reduced to eliminate the 50 cent increase to the dispensing fee for pharmaceuticals dispensed to nursing home residents and other institutional residents.

- Several cost containment initiatives were implemented in the **Medicaid Prescribed Drug Program**: $1 million was reduced to implement mail order pharmacy services for the dispensing of prescribed drugs; $8.4 million was reduced to require generic drug substitution for adults in the Medically Needy program from January 1, 2002 through June 30, 2002; $10.5 million was reduced to modify reimbursement to pharmacies to the average wholesale price (AWP) less 15 percent; $3.9 million was reduced to implement a variable dispensing fee that provides a 50 cent increase for dispensing of Medicaid preferred-drug-list products and a 50 cent decrease for the dispensing of a Medicaid product not included in the preferred-drug-list; and $5.9 million was reduced for certain brand name drugs patent expirations.

- The **Pharmaceutical Expense Assistance Program** was reduced by $22.5 million as a result of lower than anticipated utilization. The program will continue to be funded at $7.5 million which will serve an estimated 10,953 seniors at an average cost of $57 per recipient.

- Funding for the **Ticket-to-Work Program**, scheduled to be implemented April 1, 2002, was eliminated and will save $1.9 million in recurring General Revenue. The program would have provided Medicaid coverage to 1,500 working disabled individuals between the ages of 16 and 64.

- **Other reductions** include: $0.6 million related to elimination of the State Rural Financial Assistance Program for rural hospitals; $11.7 million for increased Medicaid fraud and abuse recoupment activities; $3 million for elimination of the Medicaid “Up or Out” quality of care contract management program in nursing homes; $0.5 million for elimination of the nursing home consumer satisfaction survey; $7 million for the replacement of state funds with federal funds in the Florida Healthy Kids program; and an administrative reduction of $2.0 million and 43 positions.

Department of Health

- Funding was reduced by $18.3 million in General Revenue and $13.9 million in Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund dollars. These reductions included the cuts to the Tobacco Pilot Program - $14.5 million, the Full Services Schools Program - $5 million, the Trauma Care Services category - $1.3 million, the transfer of General Revenue to the County Health Departments - $2.9 million, the reduction of agency administrative costs - $600,000, the Rural Hospital Grant Program - $2.5 million, and shifts of administrative funding from General Revenue to federal and state trust funds - $4.9 million. Twenty percent of administrative reductions were restored with non-recurring funds until June 30, 2002.

Department of Children and Families

- Funding was reduced by $17.9 million in General Revenue and $67,570 in Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund dollars. The $1 million contingency reserve for the Child Welfare Information System was reduced by $250,000 in recurring General Revenue and $250,000 in trust fund for a total of $500,000. Administration, including all administrative personnel and related salary costs in DCF, was reduced by 25 percent, a reduction that equates to a cut of 702 positions and $34 million, $18.3 million of which is recurring General Revenue. Only 5 percent of the total administrative reduction must be implemented in FY 2001-2002 because the bill simultaneously restores 20 percent of the cutback in recurring General Revenue with non-recurring General Revenue, an action that effectively defers the 20 percent reduction until FY 2002-2003.

- DCF Data Center salary costs were reduced by $2 million in General Revenue. To minimize the potential for employee lay-offs, the bill includes proviso language that allows DCF to shift up to 20 percent of the cut from Salaries to Expenses. In addition, recurring General Revenue was reduced by $1 million for the statewide acquisition of motor vehicles. The negative effects of this reduction will be mitigated by an oversupply of vehicles that will become available to DCF institutions in April 2002, when G. Pierce Wood State Hospital is finally closed down.

- A cutback of $175,249 in recurring General Revenue eliminates selected low priority training programs in DCF, and a reduction of $652,200 in recurring General Revenue eliminates Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH), a program that funds scholarships for child care workers who wish to improve their credentials beyond those that are minimally required. A reduction of $911,467 in recurring General Revenue eliminates the pre-entry training for Economic Services (ES) workers. Instead of pre-entry training, ES workers will receive on-the-job, performance-based training.

- Current year appropriations for Contracted Services were reduced by $2 million in recurring General Revenue, a cut that will equate to a one-month delay in the implementation of new contracts for child welfare services. The bill also appropriates a reduction of $878,097 in recurring General Revenue for the elimination of non-essential studies in Family Safety.

- Funding in the DCF Persons with Disabilities Program was reduced by $5.8 million. The bill reduces $1.25 million for the implementation of the Personal Planning Guide (PPG) an automated registration and information system, and transfers 36 individuals from the Community of Landmark to the Home and Community-Based Services Waiver, where these individuals will receive services in the community. This transfer will result in a $1.6 million savings to the State of Florida. In addition, the bill requires the department to maximize federal Medicaid Title XIX funds for persons with disabilities who are eligible for Medicaid services under the state plan. It also limits the cost of an individual's care plan on the Home and Community-Based Services Waiver to the average cost of a care plan for Intermediate Care Facility for Developmentally Disabled (ICF/DD).

Department of Elder Affairs

- Funding was reduced by $5.6 million in General Revenue and $25,000 in Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund dollars. Services in the Home Care for the Elderly Program were reduced by $1.1 million. The department has indicated that they will be able to handle the reduction through attrition of existing clients, so not to interrupt services to those individuals currently receiving services. The bill also eliminates $4.0 million for the expansion of the nursing home diversion program. This reduction eliminates approximately 142 slots from the program.

Department of Veterans' Affairs

- The budget was reduced by $4.6 million in General Revenue. Reductions consisted of the elimination of one vacant position in administration, a reduction of $265,000 in non-recurring General Revenue for start-up funding for the Pembroke Pines Veterans' Nursing Home, and a reduction of $4,000,000 in non-recurring General Revenue to eliminate state funding for the construction of a new veterans' nursing home in Charlotte County. Funding for the construction of two new homes, one in Bay County and one in Charlotte County, was approved in the FY 2000-2001 and FY 2001-2002 General Appropriations Acts. Fund shifts from recurring General Revenue to Trust Funds were also utilized to decrease the revenue deficit by $314,566.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Reductions for the General Government and Transportation and Economic Development agencies total 327 positions and $91.9 million in General Revenue. These reductions were primarily made in administrative positions and resources that would not impact mission critical program services, and include:

- Replaced $31 million in recurring General Revenue with agency trust funds for mission critical programs and services.

- Eliminated the Citrus Canker Tree Compensation Program - $27.2 million non-recurring General Revenue.

- Reduced $20 million non-recurring General Revenue in the Department of Transportation with no adverse impact on projects in the current adopted work program.

- Eliminated $5 million in General Revenue that was held in reserve for School Readiness programs – this reduction does not adversely impact the current level of services provided to children.

- Reduced Beach Management Fixed Capital Outlay Projects by $1.9 million with no adverse impact on currently approved projects.

Funding increases for economic stimulus initiatives total $549.1 million and include:

- $529.1 million for the Transportation Economic Stimulus Package. This funding will allow the Department of Transportation to accelerate the start-up dates for highway projects that can begin prior to June 30, 2002.

- $20 million for VISIT FLORIDA to enhance marketing and outreach programs to promote tourism. This funding for VISIT FLORIDA's recovery action plan is intended to stimulate visitation and reinvigorate Florida's tourism economy in response to the September 11 crisis.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUDICIARY

The Public Safety and Judiciary Subcommittee adopted the following five main principles to guide its deliberations: (1) to maintain funding for correctional officers and health services necessary to operate the prison system in accordance with constitutional standards; (2) to maintain the number of moderate, high, and maximum risk juvenile commitment beds and detention center beds; (3) to minimize reductions to agencies on the front lines of public safety; (4) to reduce agency administrative services first, to minimize the effect of reductions on governmental services to Florida's citizens; and (5) to lessen the impact on citizens receiving state services, by cutting programs which had not yet been started and maximizing the use of trust funds to replace General Revenue funding.

Minimize Reductions to Agencies on the Front Lines of Public Safety

- Funding within the Department of Law Enforcement for any activity that might promote the department's Domestic Security Initiatives was protected. The department's budget remains intact to combat terrorist threats and to protect the safety of Floridians.

- General Revenue reductions for State Attorneys and Public Defenders were held to 1.7 percent and then offset by allowing them to spend available trust fund balances.

- Funding for new judges which are scheduled to begin work in January was continued.

Reduce Agency Administrative Services

- The Senate bill cut 25 percent of agency administrative funds on a recurring basis.

Cutting Programs Not Yet Started/Maximize the Use of Trust Funds

- Reductions to Florida's state court system were minimized by utilizing available trust fund balances.

- The phase-in of the Monroe County Juvenile Detention Center was indefinitely delayed for a savings of $363,319 and 26 FTE.

- Consequence units designed to temporarily detain juveniles recently released from commitment who have either violated the terms of their probation or committed a minor offense were indefinitely delayed for a savings of $2.7 million and 115.50 FTE.

- Eighty-six high-risk beds which have not yet been brought on-line were eliminated for a savings of $1.2 million.

- The phase-in of 265 new non-secure specialized treatment commitment beds authorized by the 2001 Legislature and scheduled to come on-line during FY 2001-2002 are indefinitely delayed for a savings of $4.2 million.

- The phase-in of 583 secure residential commitment beds authorized by the 2001 Legislature and scheduled to come on-line during FY 2001-2002 are indefinitely delayed for a savings of $7.0 million.

After these principles had been followed, the subcommittee made the following reductions to ongoing programs:

- The Juvenile Justice Home Detention program was reduced by $5.0 million by transitioning the program to electronic monitoring instead of supervision by juvenile probation officers.

- Funding for Aftercare/Conditional Release Services was reduced by $9.4 million, and remaining funds will be used to provide contracted supervision services only to juveniles placed on probation or conditional release, who are exiting high, maximum, or moderate risk commitment facilities.

- $2.8 million was reduced in the Juvenile Probation Program by reducing clerical, regional managerial support, and OPS funding. This reduction will have a minimal impact on existing juvenile probation officer caseload ratios.

- Contracted case management services were reduced by 50 percent for an annual savings of $1.4 million. Remaining funds will be used to continue existing provider contracts and provide supplemental funding to Juvenile Assessment Centers for intake and assessment.

- A 10 percent reduction in contract rates was taken in the Non-Residential Delinquency Rehabilitation diversion program for an annual savings of $2.4 million.

- Low-risk residential commitment beds have been converted to highly structured short-term supervision, which provide a 4-week therapeutic residential component followed by four months of intensive supervision for an annual savings of $9.9 million.

- A two percent reduction in contract rates for all non-secure residential commitment programs was taken for a savings of $2.6 million. Contract rates for secure residential commitment programs were reduced by 2.5 percent for a savings of $2.5 million in FY 2001-2002. Contract rates for contracted maximum-risk commitment beds were reduced to a level commensurate with state rates for a savings of $1.3 million in FY 2001-2002.

- $1.1 million was cut from independent living beds for juveniles who complete their commitment terms and who are unable to return home.

- Various prevention programs, including the Intensive Learning Alternative Program (a dropout prevention program in Hillsborough County) and the Governor's Front Porch Program have been eliminated for a savings of $1.6 million.

- Funding for Children and Families in Need of Services was reduced by $4.6 million. Since the recurring cut was offset by a restoration with non-recurring funds, this reduction will annualize to a total of $8.6 million in FY 2002-2003.

- Department of Corrections positions providing reporting instructions to offenders and assistance to courts were eliminated for a savings of $1.4 million. This service is not mission critical to the operation of the department.

- Programs providing contracted residential substance abuse treatment services for offenders in the community were cut by $1.0 million in FY 2001-2002. Since the recurring cut was offset by a restoration with non-recurring funds, this reduction will annualize to a total of $4.0 million in FY 2002-2003.

- Community supervision staffing ratios for the Department of Corrections would increase from a current average of approximately 1:62 for a savings of $18.4 million. Those intensive supervision ratios established in statute (e.g., Community Control at 1:25) remain in effect and the ratios of lower risk offenders would "float" to whatever level is necessary to remain within appropriations.

- Educational and substance abuse treatment programs for inmates in prisons have been reduced by $2.1 million. Since the recurring cut was offset by a restoration with non-recurring funds, this reduction will annualize to a total of $6.1 million in FY 2002-2003.

- Funding for the Office of Solicitor General was eliminated for a savings of $246,198. This new initiative was funded two years ago, and prior to this time, attorneys within the Office of the Attorney General handled cases involving constitutional issues.

- Indigency examiners in the courts have been eliminated for a savings of $501,664.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 29-10; House 77-41

CS/SB 4-B — Appropriations Implementing

by Appropriations Committee and Senator Carlton

This bill provides additional instructions to governmental agencies for which funds have been appropriated so that affected agencies will be better able to implement the intentions of the Legislature as manifested in CS/SB 2-B, the supplemental Appropriations Act.

This bill amends s. 216.023, F.S., to allow agencies and the judicial branch to propose adjustments to their legislative performance measures necessary due to budget reductions. Such adjustments must be proposed by January 15, 2002 and will be considered by the Legislature using the consultation process established in Chapter 216, F.S. This provision expires July 1, 2002.

In order to implement Specific Appropriation 346 of CS/SB 2-B, this bill overrides proviso in Specific Appropriation 1235 of Chapter 2001-253, L.O.F. (FY 2001-2002 General Appropriations Act), so that if Federal Title IV-E funding is not received, the Department of Juvenile Justice will not transfer General Revenue funds from Specific Appropriation 1200 to Specific Appropriation 1235.

In order to implement Specific Appropriation 442-447 of CS/SB 2-B, this bill amends s. 339.135, F.S., to require that the Department of Transportation's Work Program be adjusted to include the transportation projects approved as economic stimulus projects in CS/SB 2-B. This provision expires July 1, 2002.

This bill states that it is the policy of the state that, until July 1, 2002, state employees undertake travel only that is considered critical to the mission of the agency. Travel for law enforcement, military purposes, emergency management, and public health activities is not covered by this section. Agencies are required to consider teleconferencing and other forms of electronic communication prior to undertaking mission-critical travel.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect January 1, 2002.
Vote: Senate 27-9; House 78-40

SB 6-B — General Inspection Trust Fund
by Senator Clary

This bill amends ss. 496.405, 496.409, 496.410, 496.419, F.S., to eliminate certain restrictions on the use of fees collected by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the regulation of solicitors of charitable contributions. Such fees are deposited into the General Inspection Trust Fund.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect January 1, 2002.
Vote: Senate 32-0; House 118-0

CS/SB 24-B — Transportation Facilities
by Appropriations Committee and Senator Clary

This committee substitute amends s. 337.107, F.S., to allow right-of-way services to be included by the Florida Department of Transportation as part of design-build contracts, and amends s. 337.11(7)(a), F.S., to expand the types of projects eligible for design-build contracts, and to allow advertisement and award of a design-build contract prior to acquisition of all rights-of-way necessary for the project. The committee substitute provides for the repeal of the provisions made in this act on June 30, 2003.

This committee substitute will allow $424.61 million in design-build projects to be advanced which could not have been advanced under current law.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 35-0; House 118-0

CS/SB 42-B — Health Insurance/Military Persons

by Banking & Insurance Committee and Senators Burt and Mitchell

The Florida Health Insurance Coverage Continuation Act ("Act") enables employees of employers with fewer than 20 employees to continue their group health coverage for 18 months after it would otherwise terminate. This law is intended to cover those employees and dependents who are not protected by the federal COBRA law which applies to employers with 20 or more employees.

The bill amends the Act to address various situations that may detrimentally affect employees who are in the military reserve or National Guard and are called to active duty.

The bill provides that if an employee is called to active duty and is terminated from his job during or after the period of active duty, the employee would be allowed to continue coverage under the employer's group plan for 18 months, beginning on the later of the date of termination of employment or the end of the active duty period.

The bill further provides that if an employee who is called to active duty dies during the period of active duty, or if there is a divorce or legal separation, or if a dependent child reaches the limiting age under the group policy, the spouse and dependent children would be entitled to elect continuation of coverage under the employer's group plan at the time of such event, whether or not the employee is covered under the employer's group coverage at that time.

The bill also addresses the situation of an employee or other qualified beneficiary who has already elected to continue his or her group coverage and is thereafter called to active duty as a member of the military reserve or National Guard. The bill provides that if the group coverage is terminated due to the qualified beneficiary becoming eligible for coverage under the federal TRICARE program, the 18-month period is tolled during the time that the individual is covered under the TRICARE program. Within 30 days after the federal TRICARE coverage terminates, the individual may elect to continue coverage under the group health plan for the remainder of the 18-month period.

The bill affects only insured employer plans with fewer than 20 employees. It does not affect employers with 20 or more employees, self-insured plans, or state and local government health plans, all of which are covered under the federal COBRA law.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 40-0; House 118-0

SB 54-B — Local Government Parking Surcharge

by Senator Silver

Senate Bill 54-B authorizes the governing authority of any municipality having a resident population of 300,000 or more on or before April 1, 1999, which has been declared in a state of financial emergency pursuant to s. 218.503, F.S., to impose a discretionary per-vehicle parking surcharge. Under current law, a municipality with a population of 300,000 or more on April 1, 1999, and that has within the past two previous fiscal years been declared in a state of financial emergency pursuant to s. 218.503, F.S., may impose the parking surcharge. The City of Miami implemented the surcharge in July 1999, and is the only city, under current law, that can qualify to levy the surcharge. The surcharge was found unconstitutional on appeal by the Circuit Court, because it limited the surcharge to the City of Miami. Senate Bill 54-B expands the eligibility to include any municipality that has been declared in a state of financial emergency, meeting the population requirements.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 37-0; House 93-18

SB 40-B — Florida Disaster Volunteer Leave Act

by Senator Burt

Under the provisions of this bill state employees in Executive Branch agencies may apply for a paid 15-day leave of absence in any 12-month period to participate in specialized disaster relief services outside of the State of Florida but within the boundaries of the United States. These changes expand the coverage now provided for similar in-state service authorized in s. 110.120, F.S. The affected employees must be certified and trained as disaster service volunteers of the American Red Cross.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 39-1; House 116-0

SB 48-B — Airports
by Senator Sebesta

This bill creates s. 332.007(8), F.S., authorizing the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to provide operational and maintenance assistance to publicly owned public-use airports for the purpose of complying with enhanced federal security requirements or to address related economic impacts from the events of September 11, 2001. The bill authorizes short-term assistance, lasting until June 30, 2003. Airports may request FDOT to change the project purpose for currently programmed state aviation funds, and FDOT may amend the adopted work program accordingly to allow for use of these funds for operational and maintenance assistance. The bill further provides that FDOT will review and approve the expenditure plan submitted by the airports before releasing any funds, and FDOT must inform the Legislature of any change that it approves under this act.

In addition, the bill attempts to address noise-related conflicts between certain airports and nearby neighborhoods. Section 2 of the bill directs any multi-county airport created as an independent special district which is subject to a DRI development order and which has conducted a noise study, to establish a $7.5 million noise mitigation fund in fiscal year 2002, and to add another $2.5 million in fiscal year 2004, to comply with a development-order commitment by the airport to acquire property, or otherwise mitigate noise impacts, in the surrounding area.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.
Vote: Senate 38-0; House 118-0

SB 94-B — License Plates
by Senators Dyer and Wasserman Shultz

This bill provides for the creation of two specialty license plates. The bill directs the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to develop an “American Red Cross” license plate. In addition to applicable motor vehicle registration taxes and fees, a $25 annual use fee will be charged for this new specialty license plate. Fifty percent of the annual use fees will be distributed to the American Red Cross Chapter of Central Florida. The American Red Cross Chapter of Central Florida is directed to distribute these funds to the various American Red Cross Florida chapters based on license plate sales in the counties covered by the respective chapters. The remaining 50 percent of the annual use fees will be distributed proportionately to the three statewide approved poison control centers for the purposes of combating bio-terrorism and other poison-related purposes.

The bill also creates a "United We Stand" license plate. In addition to applicable motor vehicle registration taxes and fees, a $25 annual use fee will be charged for this new specialty license plate. Fifty percent of the annual use fees will be distributed to the Department of Transportation to fund a grant program to enhance security at airports throughout the state. The remaining 50 percent of the annual use fees will be distributed to the Rewards for Justice Fund, ultimately to be contributed to the United States State Department's Rewards for Justice program, and are to be used solely for the apprehension and prosecution of terrorists.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2002.
Vote: Senate 28-10; House 110-4

Index

SENATE AND HOUSE BILLS

CHAPTER LAWS

FLORIDA STATUTES

A

B

C

D