



# WRAP UP Florida's 2001 Legislative Session

## Representative Curtis Richardson

PROUDLY SERVING PARTS OF LEON AND GADSDEN COUNTIES ♦ PROUDLY SERVING PARTS OF LEON AND GADSDEN COUNTIES

### Around the District

These are the dates and locations of functions and community events attended by Representative Richardson

**January 13, 2001**  
Bethel AME Church  
NAACP M.L. King, Jr. Program  
**Bond Community**  
Bond Clinic Grand Opening

**January 20th**  
Tallahassee  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Luncheon Speaker

**January 27th**  
Tallahassee  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Dinner Speaker

**February 4th**  
Quincy  
Arnett Chapel AME Church Black History Month Program

**February 10th**  
Blountstown, FL  
Town Hall Meeting on Career Service Reform

**February 17th**  
Havana  
Mt. Zion AME Church Homecoming Day, honoring Mrs. Grice

**February 22nd**  
FAMU  
Speaker - Political Science Class

**February 24th**  
Quincy  
Gadsden County Black Heritage Festival and Parade  
**Tallahassee**  
Dr. William Foster Foundation Black History Month Celebration

**February 28th**  
Quincy  
Optimist Club Law Enforcement Banquet - Speaker

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## A NEW PERSPECTIVE *a message from representative curtis richardson*

It has been an honor and a privilege to represent the citizens of District 8 in the Florida Legislature. My first year proved to be challenging yet very rewarding. There were many highlights, beginning with a controversial special session surrounding the protracted presidential election. With the advent of term limits, Floridians elected one of the largest freshman classes in the history of the House of Representatives. Under the leadership of Speaker Tom Feeney, the House tackled some of the most important issues facing our state.

Overall, the 2001 legislative session was quite productive and much was accomplished. This newsletter provides you with a brief summary of major legislation passed in several broad areas.

This year witnessed many sweeping changes in education, state employment and election procedures which will have a tremendous impact on the future of our state.

I look forward to continuing to serve you and would like to hear from you about your concerns. If I or my staff can assist you in any way, please feel free to contact us. Have a safe and enjoyable summer!



## EDUCATION POLICY *changes abound for schools in 2001*

Public education was the focus of many statewide policy changes during the 2001 legislative session. No aspect of the educational system was overlooked as both public schools and higher education received attention. Most significant were the sweeping changes in the organization of the state's public education system called for in Senate Bill 1162. In an attempt to create a "seamless" education system from Kindergarten through graduate and professional programs, the act creates a Florida Board of Education to oversee the entire system. It abolishes the Board of Regents and creates a Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor, at each of the state's ten public universities. It also requires a complete reorganization of the Department of Education under a soon to be appointed Commissioner of Education. This new system is unprecedented in the nation and thrust Florida into the forefront of change.

Also addressed during session was the

looming teacher shortage created by an increase in student population, reaching an all time high of 24 million students. In the proposed FY 2001-2002 budget \$152 million was set-aside for teacher retention and recruit initiatives, including an \$850 bonus for each full-time classroom teacher. One million dollars was earmarked for a teacher preparation program, which encourages high-achieving students to pursue teaching careers. Other legislation created special benefits for teachers to entice individuals into the profession. Left unaddressed was the issue of increasing the salaries of Florida's teachers to make us competitive with neighboring states.

This session also saw a tremendous expansion of voucher programs in our state. For instance, Senate Bill 1180 expands a program that enables parents of disabled children in public schools to receive a voucher to attend a private school if a parent is "dissatisfied" with their child's public school education. Additionally, House Bill 271 would allow a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, up to \$50 million, to corporations that make donations to non-profit organizations that fund private school vouchers for underprivileged children.

Finally, House Bill 1, co-sponsored by Representative Richardson, provides an option for small, rural school districts to pay for new school construction. Districts, based on voter approval, could raise the local sales tax by one-half cent in lieu of a property tax increase to participate in a Special Facility Construction Program.

### A CLOSER LOOK: Committee Assignments during the 2001 Legislative Session

- ♦ Vice-Chairman, Healthy Communities Council
- ♦ Education Appropriations Committee
- ♦ General Education Committee
- ♦ House Redistricting Committee

### AT A GLANCE

Legislation sponsored by Representative Richardson

Member bill - HB 139: Election Reform

Member bill - HB 785: Retirement (calculating the monthly benefits)

Member bill - HB 787: Retirement (average final compensation)

Member bill - HB 1609: Special Risk Retirement

Caucus Bill - HB 1505: Education (teacher recruitment and retention) - Floor leader and caucus committee chair



# ELECTION LEGISLATION

*historic reform revamps voting, election procedures*

On the last day of the 2001 Legislative session a sweeping \$20 million election-reform bill passed the Legislature. Less than a week later the Governor signed the measure into law. By unanimous consent this new law leaves behind the infamous 2000 election with a bill that calls for better voting machines and new rules designed to lessen voters' confusion and ensure their ballots will be counted.

The elections legislation passed this year was a historic and comprehensive reform package. Specifically, Senate Bill 1118 eliminates punch cards, proposing instead optical scanners such as those that are already in place in 26 of Florida's 67

counties. Optical scanners automatically tabulate ballots as well as reject and provide a new ballot to voters who improperly cast their vote. The state plans to pay \$24 million over the next two years to fund the switch and to pay back those counties who have already upgraded their machinery.

The reform package also sets aside \$6 million for programs aimed at educating voters and poll workers and another \$2 million to establish a centralized database of registered voters that will help to create more accurate, current registration lists and reduce voter fraud. Additionally, a Voters' Bill of Rights was established and is to be posted at all polling places so that voters will know their rights and responsibilities before they cast their ballots.

Provisional ballots even provide a new way for citizens to vote who claim to be properly registered and eligible but who do not appear on registration lists. These voters will be allowed to fill out a ballot anyway and poll workers will verify their eligibility later. Finally, election reform eliminated runoff elections in primaries beginning with the 2002 fall election. Under the new legislation, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in the primary election will be declared nominated by their respective party.

All of these provisions were aimed at easing the voting problems within the state and preventing future crises such as those experienced during the Fall 2000 general election.



## GROWTH & development

The Economic Development Bill, or HB 1225, works to improve statewide economic development, especially in rural areas. Co-sponsored by Representative Richardson, the legislation provides a community contribution sales tax credit as an alternative to the present corporate income tax or insurance premium tax credit. A taxpayer may receive a credit of 50 percent of a community contribution against taxes remitted.

Significant changes were also made to the enterprise zone program that will affect rural and urban zones by making the job tax credits dependent upon the creation of new full-time jobs rather than being based upon the hiring of new individuals into already existing jobs.

The bill tailors certain provisions to the circumstances of rural disadvantaged areas, defines rural zones, and expands the size of rural zones to reflect rural land usage patterns and population densities. In addition, the legislation directs state agencies to review other existing programs to see if they can be made more accessible to rural communities.

The bill also contains various provisions related to affordable housing issues. It provides that local governments may enact ordinances to increase affordable housing by using land use mechanisms and amends the Florida Affordable Guarantee Program to expand types of projects that qualify for the program.

Finally, the bill provides that local option gas tax revenue may be used to pave existing graded roads when compatible with the local comprehensive plan. Also relating to comprehensive planning, the bill provides that the agricultural land use category shall be eligible for the location of public school facilities.



## CAREERS & service first

In a sweeping plan that changed Florida's nearly 50-year-old civil service system, Senate Bill 466 or the "Service First" plan,

substantially revised the employment, recruitment, training, and disciplinary standards for employees of the State of Florida. Its major provisions increase the number of exempt positions not subject to career protections and reduce the steps involved in the processing of disciplinary appeals through the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC).

In hopes of rewarding productivity, performance, and accountability over seniority, the initiative transferred 16,000 employees from Career Service (CS) protection status to Selected Exempt Service (SES) status. In addition, the plan eliminated the Public Employee Relations Commission's ability in an employee appeal case to lessen the severity of discipline rendered by the employee's agency.

Seniority-based "bumping" during work force reductions was also eliminated unless the employee is a law enforcement or correctional officer, fire fighter or professional health care provider. That is especially significant when state agencies are being pushed to reduce staff by 25 percent over the next five years. The plan also streamlined pay raises, promotions and productivity bonuses.

Finally, the legislation expands the state employee education and training programs to include community colleges and public technical centers, and replaces tuition waivers with vouchers. The budget bill allocated \$500,000 for the Department of Management Services to give tuition vouchers to selected employees so that they may take courses in fields that make them more productive on the job.

### Around the District - con't

- March 1st Tallahassee**  
Intrinsic Style Shop Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening
- March 10th Tallahassee**  
Tallahassee Lender's Consortium Showcase of Homes
- March 17th Quincy**  
AFSCME Community Meeting
- March 24th Tallahassee**  
March of Dimes Walk America
- March 29th Quincy**  
Friends of Gadsden County Library Dinner Fundraiser
- April 7th Tallahassee**  
100 Black Women Chartering Ceremony
- Quincy**  
St. James AME Church Banquet Speaker
- April 8th Tallahassee - FSU**  
Alpha Phi Alpha Black and Gold Ball Speaker
- April 13th Tallahassee**  
Jake Gaither Community Playground Rededication Ceremony
- April 14th Tallahassee**  
4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Center Celebrity Easter Egg Hunt
- Quincy**  
Gadsden County Men of Action Scholarship Banquet
- April 20th Tallahassee**  
Bond Elementary School Carnival
- May 10th Tallahassee**  
Political Awareness in Our Community
- May 19th Quincy**  
Gadsden County Community Day
- June 9th Tallahassee**  
Tallahassee Urban League Affordable Homes Showcase

## Representative Richardson: Fun Facts

<b>Name:</b> Curtis Richardson	<b>Field of Work:</b> Consultant
<b>Family:</b> Married to Nina Ashenafi. One daughter, Carina.	<b>Past Political Experience:</b> City of Tallahassee, Code Magistrate 1999-Present Judicial Qualifications Commission, 1999-2000 Leon County School Board, 1990-1996 (Chairman 1993-1995)
<b>Education:</b> Florida State University, B.S., Psychology, 1978. University of West Florida, M.A., Counseling Psychology, 1979. Florida State University, M.S., Psychology, 1983.	<b>Recreational Interest:</b> Racquetball, Snorkeling

## FIRST HAND

The following students were sponsored by Representative Richardson during the 2001 Legislative Session.

<b>Messengers:</b> Jessica Clements, Leon Jocelyn Goss, Leon Joshua Ryan Hicks, Leon Rodney Lewis II, Gadsden	<b>Page:</b> James "J.R." Rollins, Leon
<b>Volunteers:</b> Krista Dawkins, Leon Crystal Patterson, Leon Kesha Williams, Leon	



## ALLOCATIONS

2001 state appropriations

A brief overview of the 2001 budget for the fiscal year 2001-2002 is as follows: \$48-billion spending plan provides a 4 percent increase in per student spending, tuition increases of 7.5 percent for university students and 3.5 percent for community college students, \$76.6 million for nursing home improvements, and \$24 million for new voting machines over the next two years.

In addition, the Legislature provided \$39.1 million for tobacco

prevention efforts, \$39 million in additional resources to improve the quality of mental health services and \$97 million to protect Florida's children from abuse and neglect.

Two tax relief bills were also passed during session 2001 in addition to the General Appropriations Act. House Bill 251, or the "Florida Residents' Tax Relief Act," called for a nine-day sales tax break for back-to-school shoppers July 28 - August 5. The tax break includes clothing costing \$50 or less and school supplies costing \$10 or less.

## PROJECT FUNDING

leon, gadsden receive local dollars

### Leon County Projects

- Project Child - \$2,400,000
- FAMU - Carnegie Library/Black Archives - \$2,000,000
- FSU - Basic Sciences Building (Medical School) - \$15,000,000
- TCC - Library Building's Second Half/Phase II partial - \$3,965,000
- Adolescent Treatment Program - DISC Village - \$125,000
- Sickle Cell Research Contract - FAMU - \$57,602
- Lincoln Room: Lincoln Neighborhood Center - \$200,000
- Acq. Right of Way to add lanes and reconstruct SR 61 (US 319) - N. Munson Slough Bridge to SR 363/4 Pts. Intersection- \$5,000,000
- Technology Infrastructure Assessment - \$150,000

### Gadsden County Projects

- New High School - \$14,869,394
- Havana Public Library - \$400,000
- Old School House Park Enhancement - \$26,000
- Park Street Park - \$112,500
- Quincy Complex Enhancement - \$112,500
- Therrell Field Improvements - Phase II - \$50,000



## HEALTHY LIVING

affordable care tops agenda

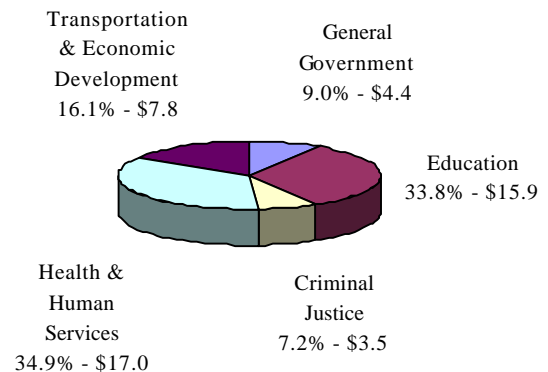
Access to affordable, quality health care was a top priority of the 2001 Legislature. House Bill 69, for instance, requires removal of all therapeutically equivalent drugs from the Negative Drug Formulary. Florida citizens may now opt for a generic substitution of medications, thus providing more affordable prescriptions. Physicians may still prohibit generic substitution of these drugs by writing "medically necessary" on the prescription.

Additionally, the Mary Brogan Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, Senate Bill 1306, authorizes the Department of Health to establish the "Mary Brogan Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program" to provide cancer screening, case management and referrals for low-income women. This program also expands Medicaid coverage

to include uninsured women under age 65 who are in need of treatment for breast or cervical cancer.

Other key 2001 health care achievements include: legislation allowing a licensed Florida physician to make the final decision when it comes to your health care instead of an out-of-state physician on an HMO payroll; continuing Florida's prescription drug assistance program for our needy seniors; prohibiting your personal medical records from being used for marketing or the solicitation of goods or services and requiring nursing homes to provide annual flu immunizations to all residents. The local match required of counties to participate in the Kid Care program was eliminated for one year. This will allow for additional coverage in this insurance plan that provides thousands of Florida's needy children with protection.

## 2001-2002 General Appropriations Act \$48.6 Billion



**DOLLARS AND CENTS** - Above is a chart of the 2001-2002 General Appropriations Act. All dollars are represented in the amount of billions per program area.



## NURSING HOMES *changes for long term care*

Legislation during the 2001 session took steps towards enhancing quality care in nursing homes for the states 70,000 long-term care residents. The Florida Legislature passed a \$76.6 million relief package, Senate Bill 1202, and called for significant changes in state nursing home rules.

Part of the legislation was aimed at bringing the state up to par with national care criteria by increasing staffing requirements, thus resulting in an increased amount of care for each individual patient.

According to a recent federal study, every nursing home resident needs at least 2.9 hours of care from a Certified Nursing Assistant each day. Before it was changed by the 2001 Legislature, state laws only required 1.7 hours of care. However, the Florida Legislature upped that requirement to 2.3 hours a day by 2002 and 2.9 hours a day by 2004. Mandatory staff increases will allow Florida to meet these goals while paving the way for the state to have the highest nursing home staffing levels in the nation by 2004.

The legislation also made changes in the accountability of nursing homes. Current claims from the nursing home industry states that lawsuits and malpractice insurance drain their resources and cause nursing homes to go bankrupt. The flurry of lawsuits has also caused an increase in the cost of liability insurance. In response, the legislature provided a cap on damages that can be claimed in lawsuits against nursing homes unless it could be shown that the nursing home "intended" to harm the resident.

Furthering accountability legislation, Quality-of-Care Monitors are now required to visit each nursing facility quarterly and include in their assessments the operations of internal quality improvement, risk management programs and adverse incident reports.



## ENVIRONMENT *legislation protects resources*

Florida's rich, abundant resources and natural beauty often merit the attention of the Florida Legislature. Taking steps to care for our drinking water resources, endangered wildlife, wetlands, and rural heritage calls for protective legislation such as that passed during the 2001 session.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Act (CERA), Senate Bill 1524, for example, authorizes the use of state funds for the purchase environmentally sensitive land contained within the Florida Forever Water Management District.

The Everglades Restoration Act also provides the necessary funds for restoring, preserving, and protecting water resources of the central and southern Florida ecosystems. This protection of water quality and the reduction of the loss of water from the Everglades are accomplished by setting standards for permitting construction, operation, and maintenance facilities in South Florida.

In an effort to preserve Florida's rural communities, Senate Bill 1922, the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act, limited the subdivision and conversion of ranch and farmlands for urban use. The bill is aimed at stopping suburbs from overrunning farmland by setting up a program to pay farmers not to sell to developers.

Legislators also worked on continuing efforts to protect Florida's waterways by maintaining wastewater, storm water, and surface water projects at \$125.6 million and awarded more money to law enforcement to step up protective patrols in areas where manatees reside.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Richardson.Curtis@leg.state.fl.us  
**Legislative Aide:**  
Gwendolyn Simmonds  
**Executive Secretary:**  
Chicarla Williams

**District Office Hours**  
**Quincy:**  
1st and 3rd Wednesday,  
10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
City Commission Chamber  
404 West Jefferson Street  
Quincy, FL 32351  
**Phone:** 850.627.7681

**Chattahoochee:**  
1st and 3rd Tuesday,  
10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
City Council Chambers  
22 Jefferson Street  
Chattahoochee, FL 32324  
**Phone:**850.663.4046

**Havana:**  
Every Thursday,  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
City Council Chambers  
711 North Main Street  
Havana, FL 32333  
**Phone:**850.539.6493

**Gretna:**  
1st and 3rd Tuesday,  
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
City Council Chambers  
14615 Main Street  
Gretna, FL 32332  
**Phone:** 850.856.5257

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