





# The Pulse in Tallahassee

Committee Week 5

February 15-19

Dear Friends,

Committee Weeks are officially over and we have a short break before heading back to Tallahassee to begin the 2021 Session. This was an extremely busy week and my first bill passed out of committee. I look forward to returning to Tallahassee and working on my legislative agenda.

Regards,

Senator Tina Polsky



Senator Polsky and her  
Freshman Senators

Here are some updates from Committee Week five:

## SB 538-USE OF EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS OF PUBLIC K-20 CAMPUSES

I was honored to present SB 538 in the Education Committee this week. This bill require all schools, including State Universities and Colleges, to purchase and mai Epinephrine Auto-injector in cafeterias and other secure locations on campuses to prevent severe allergic reactions that result in anaphylaxis. The bill passed unanin and is now set to be heard in the Senate Health Policy Committee.

## SB 258-INTERNSHIP TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

This great bill would provide a \$2000 tax credit to businesses that employ student full-time for at least 9 weeks. The supporters of this bill hope that these internship opportunities will provide students with more post-graduation job options. The b unanimously out of the Education Committee and has two more stops before heac the Senate Floor.

## SB 54-MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE

This week, SB 54 was considered in the Judiciary Committee. The bill would repeal Florida Motor Vehicle No-Fault Law, which requires every owner and registrant of vehicle in this state to maintain Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage. The bill a significantly changes the law with respect to bad faith claims. The bill passed the co by a vote of 7 to 2. I have some concerns particularly related to the section on bad f claims. I hope the bill is improved before I have another chance to vote on the Sena

## SB 90-VOTE-BY-MAIL BALLOT

This week the Committee on Ethics & Elections debated SB 90. This bill would n more difficult for individuals to vote-by-mail (VBM). Specifically, the bill would VBM requests valid for only one election cycle; currently, VBM requests are valid election cycles. Most concerning to me is the provision that would make this retr meaning that those who have already requested a VBM ballot for 2022 would hav make an additional request in order to comply with this new law. I offered an ame to make requests for VBM ballots permanent, unfortunately, my amendment was i

For more information about SB 90, Vote-by-Mail Ballot, please see my op-ed below which was published in the [Palm Beach Post](#).

**Point of View: A hypocritical bid to hamper vote-by-mail**

Palm Beach Post | 8:48 am EST February 16, 2021

In 2006, nearly 60% of votes cast by mail in the general election in Florida were cast by Republican voters. During that same year, Democrats represented only a little over a third of those ballots cast by mail.

So, in the subsequent legislative session, the Republican-led legislature changed the law. They expanded the amount of time a “vote-by-mail” request remained valid, essentially expanding the time period from one to two calendar years.

The logic then was that if someone wanted a vote-by-mail ballot, then it also made sense that the request should stand as the default for the entire election cycle and not just a single election. The logic was that we should simply expand the vote-by-mail request and let it stand through to the next general election, essentially creating a two-year window.

This change to the law had two effects.

First, it lowered the cost to campaigns and political parties and saved those campaigns the money needed to encourage their voters to get their votes in early and by mail. In short, it helped voters who voted by mail.

Second, it gave a clear advantage to GOP candidates because GOP voters were more likely — much more likely — to vote by mail.

I wasn't in the legislature at the time but, honestly, I would have supported the move because voters should be able to make a request for the entire election cycle if they so choose. And truth be told, it turned out to be a good law, as it simplified vote-by-mail and helped more voters vote — which is a good thing.

Fast forward to 2020.

Due to a variety of factors (the pandemic and President Trump's false attacks on vote-by-mail integrity, among other things), the party vote-by-mail ratio became, basically, inverted. This year (in Florida) 45% of vote-by-mail ballots were cast by Democrats while only 31% were cast by Republicans. Vote-by-mail ballots cast by Democrats went from a 22-point deficit to a 14-point advantage: a 36-point inversion.

So now, unbelievably and without a hint of irony, Republicans in Florida are pushing for a new law (SB 90) that would shorten the time period that a vote-by-mail request will be good, back down to a single calendar year.

Let us first be reminded that when Republican voters were outnumbering Democrats in vote-by-mail, the Republican-led legislature felt it was necessary to make a special provision for those vote-by-mail voters (aka "Republicans"). But now that Democrats are voting by mail in larger numbers, they suddenly want to make it harder (and more costly) for voters (aka "Democrats") to vote by mail.

It's wrong. It's hypocritical. And we must stop it.

In 2020, Florida's electoral process was hailed as a national example of efficiency and accuracy, and the way we conducted our voting by mail was also hailed as a national model.

As a lawmaker, I know we are asked to fix a lot of things that are broken in our state. That is the job we were elected to do. We should therefore be mindful of an old adage that if something isn't broken...we shouldn't break it. Our vote-by-mail laws are working very well. Now — of all times — is not the time to break it.

**TINA POLSKY, BOCA RATON**

*Tina Polsky (D) represents the Florida Senate's 29th District, which includes parts of southern Palm Beach and north Broward counties.*



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**Contact my office:**

5301 North Federal Hwy, Suite 135  
Boca Raton, FL 33487  
(561) 443-8170

222 Senate Office Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
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