

[View this email in your browser](#)



Legislative Session: Week Two

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Week Two of our 2021 legislative session is now complete. Please enjoy my update below and as always, know you may reach out to my office anytime.

Our Tallahassee line is 850.487.5031 and my email is Berman.Lori.Web@flsenate.gov.

Have a great weekend!

A handwritten signature of Lori Berman in black ink, written on a white rectangular background.

Lori

IMPORTANT VACCINE UPDATE

Palm Beach County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fennoy announced that four new vaccination sites will open this weekend for those who are:

- School employees who are 50 years of age or older.
- School employees of all ages who have documentation from a physician indicating that they are deemed medically vulnerable.

The sites are as follows:

- Jeaga Middle School – 3777 N. Jog Rd., West Palm Beach
- John I. Leonard High School – 4701 10th Ave. N., Greenacres
- Atlantic Community High School – 2455 W. Atlantic Ave., Delray Beach
- Lake Shore Middle School - 425 W. Canal St., N., Belle Glade

These sites will be open from 9am to 5pm, or until vaccines run out. They are walk-up sites only. You must bring proof of employment.

More details can be found [here](#).

Bill Action Update

SB 200: Student Retention

Heard in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education on Wednesday, SB 200 passed unanimously. Its next stop is the Appropriations Committee. This bill allows parents of K-8 students to retain their children in their grade level if they feel their child has not academically progressed enough and gives parents the flexibility to make the decision in the best interest of their child by providing this option. The deadline to submit this request, which will only be available for the 2021-22 school year, is June 30, 2021.

SB 688: Waivers of Exemptions of Applicable Assets

This bill protects Florida residents from unintentionally assigning, pledging, or waiving their rights to assets (such as retirement accounts, annuities and other

assets) that are protected under Florida law by requiring that any pledge agreement must specifically identify those types of protected assets in order to constitute an intentional assignment, pledge, or waiver. It was heard in the Senate Finance and Tax Committee on Thursday and passed unanimously. It now moves to the Appropriations Committee.



Presenting SB 200 (Student Retention) to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education on 3/10/2021. Watch the replay [here](#).

Local Funding Initiative Requests (LFIRs)

Below is a chart of all the appropriation requests I've submitted for the 2021 fiscal year, totaling \$15,164,476. Though the pandemic-induced economic contraction has left Florida with a stiff budget shortfall, these funding requests will, without a doubt, improve Palm Beach County's infrastructure, environment, and aid our nonprofits in their critical work for the community. I'll be fighting to get each of these important priorities in the General Appropriations Act this year. You can search all "LFIRs" [here](#).

Info to Note: Online Sales Tax to Supply Loss in Unemployment Trust Fund

House Speaker Sprowls and Senate President Simpson announced their joint plan to recover sales tax revenue from online purchases to re-supply our unemployment fund. A budget proposal is expected to be revealed by the legislature soon that will likely include a multitude of cuts. The sales tax money should be used to lessen those cuts and pay for schools, roads and infrastructure projects. The burden of replenishing our budget should not be placed on consumers. This proposal frames support for corporate entities as support for small businesses when, in practice, the cost will be unfairly passed to Floridians hurting the most.

Click [here](#) for an article detailing this issue more.

LFIR #	Project Title	Request Amount	Subcommittee
1235	EJS Project Teen Center	155,000	AHS
1050	Palm Springs Davis Road North Basin Drainage Improvements	163,000	AEG
1232	Caregiving Youth Project Expansion	250,000	AHS
1069	Hypoluxo Septic Sewer	350,000	AEG
1233	Jewish Family Service - Mental Health First Aid Coalition	100,000	AHS
1234	Lantana - Sea Pines Neighborhood Drainage Improvements	562,500	AEG
1308	ChildNet - Preventing Opioid/Substance Abuse Based Removals	360,000	AHS
1595	Lake Worth Beach Eden Park Sea Level Rise Mitigation	250,000	AEG
1310	Lake Worth Beach South Palm Park Sea Level Rise Mitigation	300,000	AEG
1380	Lake Clarke Shores Sewer Construction Phase 2	1,000,000	AEG
1231	Palm Beach County Homeless Resource Center 2	1,000,000	AHS
1236	RESTORE Reentry Program	500,000	ACJ
1381	Central Palm Beach County Historical Infrastructure Improvement	3,000,000	ATD
1237	Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative	2,197,530	AEG
1311	Lake Worth Beach Florida Ocean Current Energy:Phase 1	3,000,000	AEG
1309	The City of Delray Beach Learning Loss Recovery Tutorial Program	80,000	AED
1596	Community Outreach Team	525,190	ACJ
1936	Pompey Park Improvements - Delray Beach	250,000	ATD
1597	City of Delray Beach - Summer Reading Books	20,000	AED
1598	Delray Beach Owens Baker Tank Improvements	486,256	AEG
1599	Boynton Beach - Heart of Boynton Revitalization MLK Blvd.	240,000	AEG
1600	Greenacres - Swain Boulevard Sewer Extension Phase 1	300,000	AEG
	Boynton Beach Town Square Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing	75,000	ATD
	TOTAL	15,164,476	

Bills to Watch

[SJR 1238: Percentage of Elector Votes Required to Approve an Amendment or a Revision](#)

On Tuesday, the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee advanced SJR 1238, along party lines. This measure would raise the threshold to pass constitutional amendments from 60% to 66.67%. Meanwhile, over 90% of states only require a simple majority for approval. Florida will go above and beyond to impede the will of voters. Some notable amendments that wouldn't have passed at the 66.67% threshold include the Fair District Mandate, Florida's Water and Land Legacy, Voting Rights Restoration for Felons, and the \$15 Minimum Wage Increase. This bad bill now moves to the Senate Rules Committee.

[SB 86: Student Financial Aid](#)

This bill has seen substantial pushback since its inception. SB 86 restricts Bright Futures availability to careers which are expected to earn a certain high level of income, discouraging students from pursuing careers in the arts and humanities. Bright Futures has been critical in sending Florida's best and brightest students to our public universities at an affordable rate. This bill is currently scheduled to be heard in the Education committee on 3/16/21 at 12:30pm. You can watch it live [here](#) under the Senate Education Committee section.

Palm Beach County Property Appraiser Accepting Scholarship Applications

“Regardless of interest or major, all college-bound Palm Beach County students are eligible to apply,” said Ms. Jacks. “Of course, with the paid internship opportunity, we might hope that students would discover the fascinating and multifaceted field of property valuation.”

Six college scholarships of \$1,500 each will be awarded to graduating high school seniors who plan to attend a higher education institution full time. Each recipient will also be offered an opportunity for a paid summer internship in the Property Appraiser's Office.

The office of Palm Beach County Property Appraiser Dorothy Jacks, CFA, AAS, is now accepting applications for the 28th Annual Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's Scholarships.

To be eligible for a scholarship award, a student must be a resident of Palm Beach County, have a minimum of 3.0 GPA, and plan to attend an accredited higher-education institution. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2021.

"This program is particularly special to my office," said Ms. Jacks. "These scholarships are completely funded by employee donations."

Since 1994, the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser's Office has awarded nearly \$150,000 in college scholarships.

For more information, call 561.355.3230 or visit pbcgov.org/papa/scholarship-awards.htm

Municipal Elections Results

Thank you, Palm Beach County residents, for partaking in your municipal elections. Local elections are just as important as federal and state elections as your local officials are the ones most bound to you, their constituents.

Congratulations to all winners of the elections throughout Palm Beach County. Thank you to all the candidates who ran this year and who are dedicated to public service.

Results can be found [here](#).

As a reminder, residents of the City of Lake Worth Beach will be having a run-off for the District 2 seat on March 23.

Keeping Up With Berman's Bills



SENATOR BERMAN'S 2021 FILED BILLS



SB 180

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Creates the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to advise the Governor on racial and gender inequities, collaborate with state agencies and engage with stakeholders throughout Florida to develop inclusive practices, work with the Attorney General to identify racist and Jim Crow-era laws needing repeal, and conduct implicit bias trainings within Florida's agencies.

SB 182

Risk Protection Orders

Recognizes that the combination of mental illness and firearms can be lethal and expands the petitioner categories to enable a parent, legal guardian, sibling, or spouse of a troubled individual to petition courts for risk protection orders.

SB 184

Purple Alert

Creates the state's first-ever public advisory system for missing intellectually or developmentally disabled adults whose disappearance poses an imminent threat to their safety.

SB 186

Domestic Violence

Requires those who have committed misdemeanor offenses of domestic violence to surrender, upon conviction, all firearms and ammunition in their possession to law enforcement, so as not to be used to further their violence.

SB 188

Solar Energy Systems Located on the Property of Educational Facilities

This bill exempts solar energy systems from the Cost Per Student Station calculation placed on Florida's public schools, removing a significant barrier they face when trying to switch to cost-saving solar.

SB 194

Crimes Evidencing Prejudice

Brings Florida's statutory definition of a disability in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act and defines crimes committed on the basis of gender and gender identity as crimes evidencing prejudice.

SB 196

Lactation Spaces in Courthouses

Requires all courthouses to have a designated space for women to breastfeed.

SB 200

Student Retention

Allows parents of K-8 students to retain their children in their grade level if they feel their child has not academically progressed enough and gives parents the flexibility to make the decision in the best interest of their child and provide a statutory option.

SB 224

Sales Tax Exemption

Exempting seniors from the sales tax on certain items that encourage independent living, including bed transfer handles, bed rails, grab bars, and shower seats, to improve quality of life and allow our seniors to "age in place".

SB 358

Water Safety

Asks parents of children entering any public or private school system to confirm that their child has had swimming lessons when entering the school system, and allows school authorities to identify students who may not know how to swim and will help put these parents in touch with free or low-cost programs to ensure their child has an opportunity to learn, presuming there is a desire.



SENATOR BERMAN'S 2021 FILED BILLS



SB 688

Waivers of Exemptions of Applicable Assets

protects Florida residents from unintentionally assigning, pledging, or waiving their rights to assets (such as retirement accounts, annuities and other assets) that are protected under Florida law by requiring that any pledge agreement must specifically identify those types of protected assets in order to constitute an intentional assignment, pledge, or waiver.

SB 720

State Renewable Energy Goals

This critical legislation will require that by the year 2040, 100% of Florida's electricity generation be sourced from renewable energy and that we be carbon neutral by 2050. It will create thousands of good-paying, clean energy jobs and position Florida as a nationwide leader in building a clean future.

SB 832

Town of Lake Clarke Shores, Palm Beach County

Annexes a section of unincorporated Palm Beach County known as "Edgewater Park" into the Town of LCS, creating a seamless delivery of municipal services that are currently shared with PCB, including police, road maintenance, and soon, septic-to-sewer conversion.

SB 940

Specialty License Plates/Disease Prevention & Early Detection

Creates a new specialty license plate for "Disease Prevention & Early Detection" with proceeds benefiting Miami-based Women's Breast & Heart Initiative.

SB 1036

Florida Family Caregiver Task Force

Establishes the Florida Family Caregiver Task Force within the Department of Health to study and make findings regarding the necessary supports for family caregivers and youth caregivers who are assisting the aging or adults with disabilities.

SB 1038

Insurance Coverage for Breast Cancer Tests and Procedures

As a five-year breast cancer survivor, I am keenly aware of how important it is to seek important diagnostic testing following a questionable mammogram. This bill will ensure insurance providers don't charge unlimited amounts for these associated tests in an effort for patients to receive early diagnoses and treatment, keys to saving lives.

SB 1044

Victims of Crimes of Sexual Violence and Sexual Exploitation

Provides that a victim of any crime of sexual violence or sexual exploitation has the right to prevent the disclosure of identifying information or records and prohibits a person or entity in possession of such information from disclosing that information or records without obtaining express written consent.

SB 1050

School Bus Safety

Authorizes school districts to install cameras on district school buses to ensure the safety of students

SB 1070

Estates and Trusts

Creates the "Florida Uniform Directed Trust Act" addressing trusts that grant a trust administration power to a person other than a trustee, and creates the "Community Property Trust Act" that allows spouses to transfer property into a Florida Community Property Trust.

SB 1252

Inland and Coastal Flood Control Funding Assessment

Requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to include an assessment and analysis of future expenditures by federal, state, regional, and local governments necessary to improve resilience to inland and coastal flooding associated with sea-level rise, high-tide events, storm surge, flash flood, stormwater runoff, and increased rainfall in its report.

SB 1718

Renewable Energy Sources

Allows a public educational customer to enter into a contract with a third party to install, maintain, or operate a renewable energy source device. This bill facilitates the use of solar energy.

Online Portal Reopens for Emergency Rental Assistance

The Palm Beach County Community Services Department (CSD) opened its online portal for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) on March 10th. Eligible Palm Beach County residents must be a renter household in which at least one or more individuals meets all of the following criteria:

- qualifies for unemployment or experienced a reduction of household income;
- incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardships due to COVID-19;
- demonstrates a risk of homelessness or housing instability; and
- has a household income at or below 80% of the area median.

All applicants must present the following documentation in order to apply for services:

- evidence of COVID-19 direct or indirect impact
- evidence of risk of homelessness or housing instability
- evidence of income eligibility
- valid government issued ID

Rental assistance may be paid up to three months in advance and income and crisis must be recertified for each three (3) month period.

For rental assistance, landlords must be registered as vendors with Palm Beach County. Utility assistance is for electric, water and gas for eligible rental households only.

Applications will be through Palm Beach County's online portal. Applicants must submit the correct information along with all required documentation to expedite approval. Applications will be prioritized for clients who are below 30% /50% AMI , facing evictions and currently unemployed for more than 90 days.

Eligible residents may apply for emergency rental assistance at www.rentalassistancepbc.org or www.pbcgov.org/OSCARRS.

For more information, contact CSD's Contact Center at (561) 355-4792.

Health Insurance Special Enrollment Period



On March 10th, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan, which expands access to quality health care. The Biden-Harris Administration opened a special enrollment period for [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) from February 15 through May 15 for all Americans to provide them with the opportunity to sign up for health insurance during this pandemic. Health care is a right and all Americans should have access to it.



This email was sent to hammo66@aol.com

Florida Senate · 2300 High Ridge Road, Suite 161 · Boynton Beach, FL 33426 · USA