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## **Legislative Session: Week One**

Dear Friends and neighbors,

In keeping with tradition, my office will be sending a more frequent newsletter, "The Berman Buzz," to keep you informed of bill actions, the status of appropriations, and other legislative matters during the 2021 session. If you have any specific questions or concerns relating to bills, don't hesitate to reach out to my office.

Our Tallahassee line is 850.487.5031 and my email is [Berman.Lori.Web@flsenate.gov](mailto:Berman.Lori.Web@flsenate.gov).

Lori

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## Bill Action Update

### [SB 188: Solar Energy Systems Located on the Property of an Educational Facility](#)

Heard in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, SB 188 passed unanimously. Its next stop is the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. 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 energy.

### [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 Community Affairs Committee on Wednesday and passed unanimously. It now moves to the Finance and Tax Committee.

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## 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](#).

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	

## Insurance Reform in the 2021 Session

Over the past year, Florida's homeowner's insurance rates have increased by hundreds of dollars. This increase is attributed to excessive lawsuits and the

higher cost of litigation, record-setting hurricanes that have led to an increased number of catastrophe claims, and reinsurance costs.

This session, Senator Boyd of Bradenton filed [SB 76](#) as an attempt to combat these issues. The bill would allow insurance companies to change the way they cover older roofs. If your roof is over 10 years old and it gets destroyed during a hurricane, your insurance company could pay you what your old roof is worth at the time as opposed to paying 100% of the replacement cost. The bill also attempts to tackle the issue of increased litigation by creating a uniform two-year filing deadline for property insurance claims, supplemental claims, or reopen claims, and requires a 60-day notice of a property insurance claim prior to litigation. The bill also removes an optional attorney's fee multiplier that can be imposed by a judge in certain cases.

Currently, the insurer must pay a reasonable insurer fee to the insured's attorney even if the claimant only recovers a small amount. Under this legislation, the insurer's obligation to pay the attorney's fees would be directly proportional to how successful the claimant was in recovering the amount demanded in the litigation. For example, if the claimant recovers 80% of the amount demanded, then the insurer would pay all of the attorney's fees. If the claimant recovers 20-80% of the amount demanded, then the insurer would pay the percentage of fees proportional to the percent recovered. Both of these provisions in the bill attempt to reduce fraud and ensure that attorneys aren't recovering more than the claimant.

One concern I have with this bill is related to the costs to replace a roof if older than 10 years old. The change would provide less coverage for homeowners who have roofs that are older than 10 years old depending on the type of material of the roof. However, homeowners could be left in the dark about the reduced coverage if an agent does not speak with a homeowner to purchase or renew their insurance and inform them of the change or if a homeowner decides to purchase insurance without the assistance of a broker.

While I do not sit on any of the committees the bill will be heard in until the floor, I hope some of the issues with this legislation will be resolved as it gets heard in committee.

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## **Voting Information: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS THIS TUESDAY!**

Voting does not end with the Presidential Election. Some local elections take place every year, and voters have the opportunity to choose people who will represent them in the city council, commission, or as mayor. The 2021 Municipal Elections will take place on Tuesday, March 9, 2021. Not all municipalities in Palm Beach County will have an election, but those who are hosting elections have different positions that are being contested.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the candidates running for office in your municipality and to check if your municipality is having an election on March 9th.

Registration Deadline – March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Election – March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 7am to 7pm

Deadline to Return Vote-By-Mail Ballot – 7pm on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021

[Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections Website](#)

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## **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

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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](http://pbcgov.org/papa/scholarship-awards.htm)

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## **Keeping Up With Berman's Bills**

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## 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.



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**Our mailing address is:**

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