



Legislative Session: Week Five

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Week Five of our 2021 legislative session is now complete. Stay tuned for continued updates and please ask questions and stay involved. This week's update is below.

While vaccines are continuing to be provided, I still encourage you to continue practicing social distancing and safety measures such as washing your hands often and wearing masks. Stay well and healthy.

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

Happy Spring,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lori Berman' followed by a horizontal line.

Lori



Senator Berman speaking with Senators Diaz and Broxson on the Senate Floor about energy policy and her bill, SB 188

IMPORTANT VACCINE UPDATES

The age of eligibility for vaccines will officially be **lowered** to 18+ on Monday, 4/5. The Health Care District of Palm Beach County opened its online scheduling portal on Wednesday. Those who are 18+ can self-schedule appointments online at <http://vaccine.hcdpbc.org/>. Locations include the South Florida Fairgrounds, the South County Civic Center, and the Burns Road Community Center. The website will continue to be updated as more vaccines become available. Baptist Health is also scheduling appointments online at <https://baptisthealth.net/Coronavirus/Vaccine> and is updating the website as more doses become available.

For those who are homebound and need a vaccine,

email HomeboundVaccine@em.myflorida.com with your name and phone number to put in your request.

The Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) will contact you within 72 hours to collect more information & schedule your appointment.

SPB 2500: General Appropriations Act for FY 2021-2022

A full summary of the Senate's proposed spending bill, SPB 2500, has been provided by the Senate Democratic Office. You can access it below:

[Budget Summary](#)

Here are some highlights:

- No American Recovery Act funds, **which no Republican in Congress supported**, are accounted for in Senate's budget (yet). House has about \$8 billion of ARA funds throughout its budget
- Maintains \$5 billion in reserves

Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund:

- The bill takes about two-thirds of the \$423 million available for affordable housing and directs it into the Resilience Florida effort to plan for sea level rise, and into water protection programs to convert septic system to sewer.
 - Each program would get \$141 million from the Sadowski trust fund (*SPB 2512*)
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- Last year \$370 million was allocated for affordable housing by the Legislature but the Governor vetoed \$225 million, replacing some of that with CARES Act money.

In Education:

- K-12 Education
 - The bill maintains the FEFP at current FY 2020-21 levels:
 - Base Student Allocation: \$4,319.49 (House FEFP \$4,371.60, a \$52 increase)
 - Per-Student FEFP: \$7,786.61 (House FEFP \$7,850.36, a \$64 increase)
- Teacher Salaries
 - \$500 million for second year of program to raise minimum teachers' salaries to \$47,500
- State PECO Funding
 - \$100 million for Charter Schools
 - \$12.4 million for specific Traditional Public School projects
- Higher Education
 - No tuition increase for Florida university or state college students
 - \$217 cut State Universities

Pay Issues:

- \$43 million for minimum wage Increase to \$13/hour for state employees

Health Care:

- Hospitals lose about \$251 million for treating Medicaid patients because they got so much federal money during the pandemic.

In Criminal and Civil Justice:

- \$140 million savings (cut) with controversial prison consolidation plan that closes 4 state prisons (no private ones)

Trust Fund Sweeps to General Revenue:

116. Pursuant to section 215.32(2)(b)4.a., Florida Statutes, \$187,000,000 from unobligated cash balance amounts specified from the following trust funds shall be transferred to the General Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year 2021-2022:

AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION

Grants and Donations Trust Fund..... 30,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares and Mobile

Homes Trust Fund..... 5,000,000

Professional Regulation Trust Fund..... 10,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Triumph Gulf Coast Trust Fund..... 25,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Inland Protection Trust Fund..... 30,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial Institutions Regulatory Trust Fund..... 3,000,000

Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund..... 15,000,000

Regulatory Trust Fund/Office of Financial Regulation..... 10,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Grants and Donations Trust Fund..... 10,000,000

Medical Quality Assurance Trust Fund..... 15,000,000

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Operating Trust Fund/Division of Administrative Hearings.. 1,500,000
Public Employees Relations Commission Trust Fund..... 500,000

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

State Transportation Trust Fund..... 32,000,000



Senator Berman asking questions of the bill sponsor on Senate Bill 750 in the Finance and Tax Committee. As proposed, SB 750 would place new restrictions on local governments to levy impact fees on residential and commercial construction that help manage growth sustainably. The fees are put towards improving surrounding infrastructure and services such as schools, roads, libraries and public safety.

Keeping up with Berman's Bills

SB 1070: Estates and Trusts

This bill creates the "Florida Uniform Directed Trust Act" addressing trusts that grant a trust administration power to a person other than a trustee, and create the "Community Property Trust Act" that allows spouses to transfer property into a Florida Community Property Trust. The bill was heard in the Senate Community Affairs Committee and passed unanimously. Its next stop is the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 358: Water Safety and Swimming Certification for K-12

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. The bill was heard in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday and passed unanimously. Its next and final committee stop is the Rules Committee. If passed there, it could head to the floor of the Senate for a vote.

Bills to Watch

SB 78: Dues and Uniform Assets

This bill is another attack on unions in our state. The bill would add a new step to the process of deducting union fees by having government employers confirm with workers that they want dues taken out of their pay before deductions could start. It's part of a national push by billionaire-funded think tanks to make the unionization process more complicated and would put employers in charge of the membership process for the first time in Florida's history. The bill analysis stated that it will likely depress union membership. This bill is in its last committee of three before moving to the Senate Floor. Its House Companion, HB 947, is in its second of three committees and has not been put on the agenda yet.

SB 1014: Employee Organizations

SB 1014 attacks unions representing educators throughout the state. It places restrictions on these unions including not allowing a union to represent employees if fewer than 50% of eligible employees are in the union, forcing union members to renew each year, and preventing school districts from deducting union dues from teacher paychecks, meaning teachers would have to pay their union dues directly. Teachers from all over the state came to Tallahassee to speak against the bill. Despite the opposition to the bill, the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee passed the bill. Its next stop is in the Senate Rules committee.

SB 264: Higher Education

This bill requires the State Board of Education to conduct an annual assessment on the viewpoint of college professors in order to assess the status of intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity. The bill would also allow students to record lectures without the consent of others for their personal use or use in a criminal or civil case and prohibits universities from banning controversial speakers on campus. While the bill is intended to “protect intellectual freedoms” the consequences of the bill could do more harm than good. The assessment that the bill provides for would collect data on the personal political opinions of our university, faculty, staff, and students. But one concerning discrepancy is whether the information from the survey will remain anonymous. The bill also has the potential to stifle students’ intellectual growth and weaken the rigorous debate and exchange that define American higher education. Universities and colleges should be a space where students and faculty feel comfortable to explore new ideas and issues and allowing lectures to be recorded without the consent of others puts that space in jeopardy. The bill was heard on the Floor on Thursday and was placed on Third Reading.

Highlights of the Federal American Rescue Plan

- **Direct Payments to Working Families & Expanding Child Tax Credit** - Providing working families an additional direct payment of \$1,400 per person.
- **Expanding the Child Tax Credit** - The bill makes the child tax credit fully refundable for 2021 and increases the annual amount from the current \$2,000 per child to \$3,000 per child.
- **Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations** - Providing over \$20 billion to establish a national COVID-19 vaccination program and improve the administration and distribution of vaccinations.
- **Scaling up COVID-19 Testing, contacting tracing, and mitigation** - \$47.8 billion for testing, contact tracing, and mitigation.
- **Providing the resources needed to allow schools to safely reopen** - \$130 billion available to states and school districts for immediate and long term relief so they can work with public health experts to safely re-open schools and make up for lost time in the classroom.
- **Extending unemployment benefits** - extends the federal supplemental benefit unemployment benefit through September 6, while keeping the benefit at the current \$300 per week.
- **Housing Assistance** - \$22.5 billion for emergency rental and utility assistance to states, territories, counties, and cities to help stabilize renters during the pandemic
- **Food Security** - Extends SNAP maximum benefits by 15% (through September 30, 2021)
- **Ensuring Affordable Child Care** - \$39 billion through the Child Care and Development Block Grant for child care providers
- **Supporting Small Businesses and Non Profits** - Creates a \$28.66 billion Restaurant Revitalization Fund.
- **State and Local Funding** - \$350 billion for states, localities, the U.S. territories, and the Tribal Governments, including to help keep critical workers on the job.

Estimates for State and Local Funding

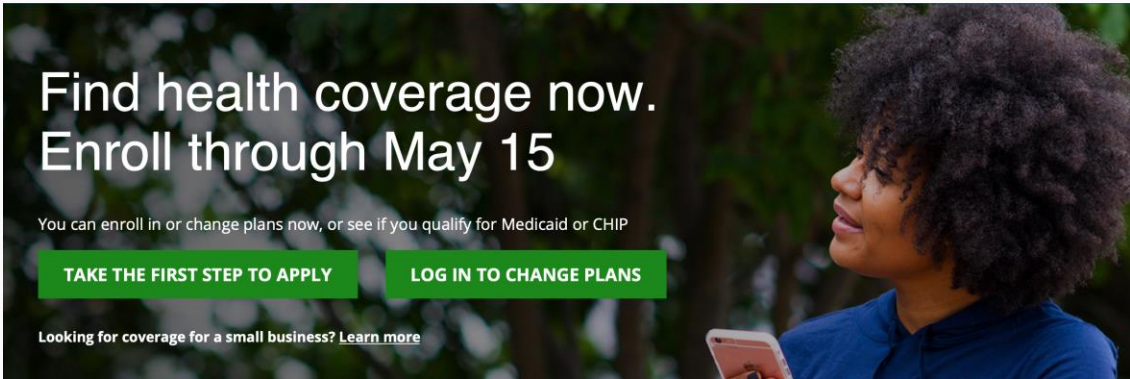
Please note these are only estimates and final amounts may differ

- State of Florida - \$10.2 billion
- Palm Beach County - \$290 million
- Palm Beach County School District - \$400 million



Senator Berman in debate on Senate Bill 1890. The bill aims to place more restrictions on the citizen initiative process, capping contributions that political committees can make towards initiatives during the signature gathering phase. Senator Berman spoke forcefully against the measure, reminding the committee of the Legislature's long history of attacking citizen-led initiatives that often enjoy broad bipartisan support from voters.

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The advertisement features a woman with curly hair looking at her phone against a blurred green background.

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.



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The contact block is set against a dark blue background with gold and white text and icons. It includes a central 'CONTACT US' heading, office addresses, email, and social media links. It also features a circular portrait of Senator Lori Berman and the official seal of the Florida Senate.





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