



Dear Friends,

We have reached the halfway point of the 2022 legislative session. My staff and I have been working diligently to pass comprehensive, good bills that will directly benefit both District 29 and the entire State of Florida.

Here is an update from the fourth week of session. This week's Pulse includes updates on my Saltwater Intrusion Assessments bill, as well as the dangerous "elections police" bill heard in the Ethics and Elections committee. Local information on various assistance programs and COVID-19 testing/vaccine sites can be found further down. As always, if you'd like to get in touch with me and my staff directly please send us an email at Polsky.Tina.Web@flsenate.gov.

Respectfully,

Senator Tina Polsky



**Senator Polsky with Nemours Children's Health
and Dr. Pritchett; working hard to pass SB 292 -
Newborn Screenings for CMV**

I am proud to have passed SB 1238 - Saltwater Intrusion Assessments through its first committee. The bill expands the landmark Resilient Florida Grant Program to provide funding to counties to conduct saltwater intrusion vulnerability assessments. This will allow counties to understand which drinking water wells that are at risk and make long-term plans alongside the water management districts and local utilities to combat this issue.



Florida Conservation Voters
@FCVoters

Sen. [@TinaPolsky](#)'s good saltwater intrusion vulnerability bill (SB 1238) passes. That's the first committee stop in the Senate. Saltwater intrusion is a threat to Florida.



Senator Polsky in between committees

Ethics and Elections

24 hours before the Ethics and Elections Committee met on Tuesday, a new version of SB 524 was released, which is an elections bill that makes it harder to vote by vote-by-mail and creates an elections police.

During debate I asked dozens of questions about the bill. Among many things, SB 524 would create a new elections police to deal with an issue that is virtually non-existent, but part of the political agenda for the Governor.

Another provision of concern relates to the additional vote-by-mail requirements. Effective in 2024, a third envelope will be required to be used when returning a vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot, with additional identifying information to be used on the Voter's Certificate. When returning a vote-by-mail ballot, current law already requires a return mail envelope and a secrecy envelope and that a voter sign a certificate form. The bill would require voters to include an identifying number on their Voter's Certificate Form, and that a third certificate envelope be used in which the certificate envelope will be enclosed. This provision is needlessly confusing, and will create privacy concerns for voters.

A supervisor or canvassing board, in addition to current law requirement to verify a voter's signature, must also verify and cross-check a voter's identifying number. A VBM ballot that does not include an identifying number (Driver License, Florida ID or SSN) will not be counted, even though this information was already included in the initial request for the ballot. For these reasons and more, I opposed the bill. Unfortunately, SB 524 passed 5-3. The bill's next stop is the Senate Community Affairs committee, on which I also serve. I plan to continue to ask the difficult questions.

Community Affairs

Unfortunately the Senate Committee on Community Affairs once again continued its attack on local governments. I voted against SB 520 - Vacation Rentals, which preempts the regulation of vacation rentals and rental platforms to the state. While the bill does provide some authority to local governments to allow them to accept or deny registration applications, SB 520 limits the powers of local governments to regulate the rentals on a larger scale.

SB 1124 - Local Government Wage Mandates was another bad preemption bill, preventing local governments from setting livable wage standards for contracts within their municipalities.

Education

This week the Education committee was fairly uncontroversial (but keep an eye out for week 5).

One bill of note this week was SB 1690- Charter School Revolving Loan Program.

The bill appropriates \$10 million in funds from the Department of Education to create the Charter School Revolving Loan Program. While it is meant to provide assistance to charter school operators, I do not understand why it is necessary given that the legislature appropriated over \$182 million for charter schools in last year's budget. We need to provide the same attention and care towards our public school system.

Stop the war on our history and your schools



Your Turn
Tina Polsky
Guest columnist

A school district official in Southlake, Texas, stated classrooms using books on the Holocaust must offer “opposing” views.

In an audio clip, the director of curriculum for the Carroll Independent School District was caught explaining that state law required it.

More recently, a school district in Tennessee banned a book on the Holocaust, the Pulitzer-prize winning *Maus*, from its schools.

I had hoped these were isolated incidents and that this type of lunacy could never spread to our state. After reading a host of proposed laws making their way through the Florida Legislature, I have come to the realization I was wrong.

Lunacy is on its way. One bill gives parents powers to examine all reading material and determine if they somehow offend their sensibilities.

Another seeks to all but ensure only wealthy people can serve on school boards, while another encourages frivolous lawsuits if a parent believes their child was made to feel uncomfortable on matters of race and other cultural subjects.

Taken as a whole, these bills and this movement

represent a wholesale attack on our local schools and those who strive every single day to teach our children.

Apparently, it wasn't enough for the thought police to mandate that teachers relinquish their education and teach primarily to the state-mandated curriculum.

Nor was it enough to grade their performance regarding those tests even if they didn't teach the subject.

Now we are threatening the very educators who we claim to honor that if they teach actual history and a parent disagrees, that that parent can claim it caused mere discomfort for their child and they can sue the teacher and/or the school board.

Thomas Jefferson, was a cruel slave owner. We now know that he not only owned dozens of slaves who were tortured, beaten and raped, he personally oversaw the movement of slavery from the field to the factory and used young boys to work in hotbox nail factories to the point that many died or were disabled from the conditions.

Yet Jefferson also penned an incredible document in the Declaration of Independence, fought for individual liberties, created the nation's first secular public university and did an incredible array of great things for this nation.

Jefferson does not fit neatly into a box and that is undeniably uncomfortable and disquieting. If we teach our children the full and honest picture of our nation's third president, of course it will cause discomfort. It will be unsettling.

And it should be. History is not neat.

And our nation's struggle with racism, antisemitism

and sexism are uncomfortable. For more than half of our country's existence, women were prohibited from voting.

But that doesn't mean we should ignore that checked past or be reluctant to celebrate our incredible achievements.

Indeed, our children should learn these things and they should embrace them and grow from them.

Learning these uncomfortable truths will make our nation stronger, our children smarter and the next generation better able to confront new atrocities when they see them.

But, attacking teachers, attacking school board members, making school boards more partisan and empowering fringe groups is not what this country is about.

America is better than that and most Floridians know that.

I will oppose each of these bills because I believe that the freedom to speak should also include the freedom to think, the freedom to understand and the freedom to learn – even if what you learn makes you uncomfortable.

And yes, the Holocaust was very real, very horrible and I am proud that our nation stood up against the Nazis.

I will use every breath I have to ensure that every child in our state knows these facts.

All of them.

Tina Polsky represents the Florida Senate's 29th district. She is a Democrat who lives in Boca Raton.



Senator Polsky meeting with Florida YMCA's and Boca Raton YMCA, working on our appropriation

THIS WEEK IN TALLAHASSEE



Senator Polsky meeting with Youth Shine, Foster Care advocates



Senator Polsky meeting with the Concerned Veterans Coalition

THIS WEEK IN TALLAHASSEE



Senator Polsky and Laurie Sallarulo, CEO of Junior Achievement Broward County working on our appropriations



Senator Polsky with JAFCO - Jewish Adoption and Family Care Options working on our appropriations

COUNTY LEVEL ASSISTANCE

Palm Beach County Property Appraiser accepting scholarship applications

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, regardless of interest or major. Each recipient will also be offered an opportunity for a paid summer internship in the Property Appraiser's Office.

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, 2022.

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

For information on Palm Beach County Rental Assistance, Utility Assistance, Homeless Services, Seniors Services, Veterans Services and more, please visit rentalassistancepbc.org

For Broward County, please visit <https://www.broward.org/RentAssistance/Pages/default.aspx>

The Broward County Commission has received approximately \$53 million in funding from the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), in an initiative that enables local governments to allocate emergency funding to residents who are suffering financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are behind on your rent or utilities, or unable to pay your current rent, the ERAP can help.

Visit [Broward.org/RentAssistance](https://www.broward.org/RentAssistance) or call the ERAP Hotline at 954-831-9727 Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 5PM for more information.



COVID-19 UPDATE

Free at-home COVID-19 tests

The White House's free COVID-19 at-home test program is LIVE. Each household is eligible for 4 free at-home test kits. Go to [Covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov) to claim yours today!

Give your COVID-19 vaccination protection a boost.

To stay safer this winter, get your COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can. If you're already fully vaccinated, get your booster shot as soon as you're eligible. Everyone age 18 and older can now get a COVID-19 vaccine booster 6 months after your 2nd dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine; or 2 months after your single dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccines continue to work very well at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. A booster shot is an extra dose that helps keep up protection.

Remember to bring your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record card when you go for your booster shot.

COVID-19 LOCAL TESTING SITES

For a complete list of open and active COVID-19 testing sites in Palm Beach County, please visit: <https://discover.pbcgov.org/coronavirus/pages/testing-sites.aspx>

This website has an actively updated spreadsheet showing both testing and vaccine sites across Palm Beach County, with many offering free, no costs tests.

For Broward County, please visit: <https://www.broward.org/CoronaVirus/pages/collection-sites.aspx>