


MEMORANDUM

March 29, 2017

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: 2017 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – WEEK 3, MARCH 20-24, 2017

The Florida Legislature completed its third week of the 2017 legislative session. This session certainly has had a different feel than past sessions. Typically at this point in session, the House and Senate are each developing their budgets. However, budget discussions are expected to begin next week. The House scheduled to hold appropriations' committee meetings each day during week four of session.

To help offset the bleak budget outlook for the State, one possible source of new funds is emerging — the renewal of the compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. HB 7037, proffered by the Tourism & Gaming Control Subcommittee, authorizes the Governor to execute a Gaming Compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Under its terms, the 2017 Compact extends the Tribe's current exclusive authorization to conduct banked games statewide and slot-machine gaming outside of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties for 20 years. In exchange, the Tribe will make revenue-sharing payments totaling at least \$3 billion to the State during the first seven years of the 2017 Compact. The Tribe may stop or reduce revenue-sharing if the State subsequently authorizes specified gaming in violation of the exclusivity afforded by the 2017 Compact.

The proposed bill specifies that the monies paid by the Tribe to the State shall be allocated as follows:

- Three percent shall be distributed to local governments affected by the Tribe's operation of covered games;
- One-third of the remaining funds shall be allocated to K-12 teacher recruitment and retention bonuses;
- One-third shall be allocated to schools that serve students from persistently failing schools; and
- One-third shall be allocated to higher education institutions to recruit and retain distinguished faculty.

If such payments are not allocated for the specified educational purposes in the precise manner and amounts set forth above, all further payments due to the State will cease until such time appropriate allocations are made. At that point, payments to the State will resume. The bill passed the House Ways & Means Committee by a vote of 11 to 7.

The Senate Education Committee held workshops to discuss several bills related to assessments, accountability, and high school graduation requirements. Discussed were Senator Bill Montford's SB 964, which has been co-sponsored by Senators Rene

Garcia and Tom Lee. This bill would reduce the number of tests that must be administered as part of the state education accountability system. A competing proposal by Senator Anitere Flores, SB 926, would reduce district-testing windows to three weeks without eliminating any exams required by the state. While the differences seem nuanced, a significant battle between public education advocates and self-appointed reformers looms in the details of these bills as evidenced by public speakers on the bills.

SB 642, sponsored by Senator Rene Garcia, revises construction provisions related to public educational facilities. Specifically, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to, upon request by a district school board, grant an exemption to the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF). The district school board must provide a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis along with its request for an SREF exemption. This is one of the Board's priorities, and it passed the Senate Education Committee unanimously.

HB 286, sponsored by Senator Greg Steube and related to Human Trafficking Education, adds the requirement to include information on the dangers and signs of human trafficking to the instructional requirements for middle and high school students in the public school system. The bill passed the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee.

HB 757, sponsored by Representative Byron Donalds, requires:

- The "Just Read, Florida!" office to train personnel in Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) through grade 5 on effective research-based reading instructional strategies and interventions;
- Each Early Learning Coalition to coordinate with Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) to assign student identification numbers to VPK students;
- Each public and private school in the VPK program to provide parents the results of the evidence-based pre- and post-assessments within 10 days after administration of each assessment; and
- Statewide kindergarten screening to emphasize and directly assess early literacy and numeracy skills.

Furthermore, the bill authorizes a child who is at risk of not attaining the VPK performance standards to re-enroll in one of the school year programs for the subsequent year at the request of the child's parent. The bill appropriates \$10 million to the FLDOE for training and development of VPK through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals on research-based reading instructional strategies and interventions. The bill passed the PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee.

SB 436, sponsored by Senator Dennis Baxley, creates the "Florida Student and School Personnel Religious Liberties Act." The bill, which relates to religious expression in public schools, passed the full Senate this past week. A similar bill, HB 303, has been placed on the House Calendar for the upcoming week.

Upcoming

The Florida School Boards Association will host its days in the capital March 29-31, 2017. The Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards will host its advocacy days March 29-30, 2017, as well.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305 995-1497.

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cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet