



Friends,

Last week was the opening of the 2017 Legislative Session. The Senate convened for Regular Session on Tuesday, March 7, 2017. During the first day of Session, also known as Opening Day, it is customary for the presiding officers to expound on the key priorities their respective Chambers will focus on during the next 60 days. Senators joined with their families, friends, and constituents on Opening Day to commemorate the official start of the Legislative Session. You may view the full first day of the Senate Session, which includes remarks by Senate President Joe Negron at the following link: [Opening Day in the Senate](#). Also on Tuesday Governor Scott gave his State of the State address during Joint Session. He emphasized his support for Enterprise Florida and VISIT Florida and his unwavering focus on job creation.

Last week was a busy one for me personally as I had the opportunity to present five bills in committee, all of which were voted favorable and will move on to the next committee for review. I am also excited to share my interview with Comcast news regarding my Feminine Hygiene Tax bill. You can watch the interview by [clicking here!](#)



Fire Warning Update

Although the recent wildfire in eastern Collier County has been contained, wildfires still pose a threat to residents. Please view the information below shared by Commissioner Putnam to find out how to best keep you and your family safe.

When re-entering your community after a wildfire:

- Use caution and exercise good judgment when re-entering a burned wildland area.
- Hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.
- Avoid damaged or fallen power poles or lines, and downed wires. Immediately report electrical damage to authorities. Electric wires may shock people or cause further fires. If possible, remain on the scene to warn others of the hazard until repair crews arrive.
- Be careful around burned trees and power poles. They may have lost stability due to fire damage.
- Watch for ash pits and mark them for safety. Ash pits are holes full of hot ashes, created by burned trees and stumps. You can be seriously burned by falling into ash pits or landing in them with your hands or feet. Warn your family and neighbors to keep clear of the pits.
- If a power line or pole should fall next to you, hop out of the area. You are less likely to be shocked if you are hopping.

Rekindling:

Rekindling can occur if the wildfire is burning below the surface level in compact decomposing vegetation or decaying tree stumps/logs are smoldering. If the wildfire is not constantly patrolled, monitored and mopped-up then a wildfire can re-ignite. A good indicator of this occurring is puffs of smoke during the driest part of the day. State Wildland Firefighters will continue to be out there every day patrolling, monitoring and mopping-up.

Resources on Scene

Florida Forest Service: 110 state and federal firefighters
Engines - 11
Firefighting bulldozers (medium) -17
Firefighting bulldozers (heavy) - 4
Helicopters – 2
Fixed wing- 1
Swamp buggies- 3

Greater Naples Fire District and mutual aid companies:

67 city and county firefighters
Brush Trucks – 2
Engines – 6
Water Tenders – 2
Chief Officers - 12

More information and updates are available on the Collier County website, www.colliergov.net. A call center has been established (239) 252-8444.

Sponsored Bills:

SB 660 – Foreclosure Proceedings

On Monday I presented my bill regarding Foreclosure Proceedings to the Banking and Insurance committee. CS/SB 660 allows for the use of certain documents filed in a bankruptcy case in a mortgage foreclosure proceeding. Often, a debtor subject to foreclosure will file for bankruptcy as a means of obtaining an automatic stay of the foreclosure action plus a discharge of the mortgage debt. In bankruptcy, a debtor must file a statement under penalty of perjury of his or her intent to retain, redeem, or surrender any property securing a debt. The debtor is supposed to act on that decision as a condition of obtaining a discharge of his or her debts. In some cases, debtors have stated an intention to surrender real property in bankruptcy proceedings but then later have actively contested the completion of foreclosure proceedings in state court. This bill provides that a lender in a mortgage foreclosure case may use any document filed under penalty of perjury in bankruptcy court as an admission by the defendant. The bill provides that a document evidencing surrender in the bankruptcy case create a rebuttable presumption that the debtor has agreed to surrender the real property and that the debtor has waived all defenses to the foreclosure action. The bill also allows the court to take judicial notice of the final order in a bankruptcy case. The bill further provides that a debtor who has agreed to surrender the property may still use a defense based on actions of the lienholder that occurred subsequent to the debtor's filing of the statement of intention to surrender the mortgaged property. The bill also provides that the debtor may still file valid defenses to the foreclosure proceedings. I am pleased that the committee voted favorably on this bill by an 8-0 vote and will move forward into its next committee.



SB 730 – Insurer Insolvency

Also on Monday I presented my bill regarding Insurer Insolvency to the Banking and Insurance committee. SB 730 incorporates national model acts on receivership from the NAIC, fixes inconsistent judicial rulings, and streamlines Chapter 631 of the Florida Statutes. This bill will provide efficiencies in the receivership processes so that the state can efficiently liquidate the insurer and use the proceeds to equitably pay claims, including those of policyholders, creditors, and employees. This consumer-centric legislation also ensures that policyholders will receive continuity of care during an HMO insolvency by moving health care providers up in the priority of claims payments, providing parity to consumers in a PPO liquidation. The bill closes a loophole that allows for Directors and Offices of the liquidated insurance company

to gain access to funds through a third party. It limits the amount of time between an order to show cause and the return hearing, requiring that the return hearing be held within 60 days of the entry of an order to show cause, which will ensure the liquidators ability to quickly act to protect consumers. This bill also requires Directors and Officers of the liquidated insurance company to cooperate with the receiver and allows the Division to refund unearned premiums to a consumer without a burdensome claims process. Finally, the bill clarifies that the Office of Insurance Regulation can continue to pursue regulatory remedies against insolvent entities during the automatic stay required in receivership proceedings, and it eliminates unnecessary notices and outdated statutes to provide efficiency and correct conflicts. The bill was voted favorably in its first committee.

CS/SB 210 – Public Records/Public Guardians

My third bill presentation of the week was to the Government Oversight and Accountability Committee. This bill serves to protect current and former public guardians and their families and children. The bill aims to create an exemption from public records requests for certain identifying information of these individuals. This information includes the home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, places of employment, and photographs of current or former public guardians; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of their spouses and children; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current and former public guardians. Although there are certain exemptions to this protection, the Legislature finds that the release of identifying and location information of current and former public guardians and their family members might place them in danger of physical and emotional harm from disgruntled individuals who may act inappropriately or seek revenge due to actions taken by public guardians. Public guardianship is a noble and often complicated role and I believe a citizen who takes on this responsibility should not have to worry about the privacy of themselves, their spouse, or children. The bill passed favorably in committee.

SB 954 – Canvassing of Vote-by-mail ballots

On Tuesday I presented SB 954 in my Ethics and Elections Committee meeting. This bill creates a process to remedy and count a vote-by-mail ballot where the ballot signature submitted by the voter does not match the signature on file in the registration book/precinct register. The bill states that in order to count a mismatched signature ballot, the voter must submit a signed affidavit attesting to his or her eligibility along with the fact that he or she requested and returned a vote-by-mail ballot, while also acknowledging that committing voter fraud or voting multiple ballots is a 3rd degree felon. My goal with this bill is to ensure that Florida voters' voices are heard. The bill passed unanimously through the Ethics and Elections Committee and I am enthusiastic about the progress of this legislation.

SB 802 – Regulated Professions and Occupations

On Wednesday I presented SB 802 to the Regulated Industries committee. SB 802 addresses licensing, registration, and regulatory requirements for various professions and occupations. The bill eliminates the current licensure required for business entities in certain regulated professions, while retaining licensure for the individuals engaged in those professions. These regulated professions include architects, interior designers, and asbestos abatement consultants and contractors. The bill modifies talent agency restrictions; it allows certain activities to be practiced without licensure, including auctioneering, certain boxing match services, and professional geology. The bill established regulations for restricted barbering and nail and facial services. It also provides requirements for specialists in practices defined as “nail specialty,” “facial specialty,” and “full specialty.” The bill eliminates licensure and registration requirements for those who engage solely in braiding, hair wrapping, or body wrapping. Finally, the bill eliminates licensure for labor organizations and for yacht and shipbroker’s branch offices. To see the full set of changes, please [click here](#) to view the bill summary. The committee voted favorably on the bill.

My Committees:

Ethics and Elections

The Ethics and Elections committee met on Tuesday to hold a confirmation hearing for select executive appointments and review bills sponsored by Senator Baxley and Senator Bean, as well as my bill, SB 954.

[Click here](#) to see the full list of Governor recommended appointments.

After the approval of the Governors appointees, Senator Baxley introduced his bill SB 914, which revises Florida’s “Government in the Sunshine Law” by codifying judicial interpretation and application of s. 286.011, F.S. Specifically, the bill provides definitions for the following terms: “de facto meeting,” “discussion,” “meeting,” “official act,” and “public business.” The bill also provides guidelines for boards to conduct permissible fact-finding exercises or excursions. Finally, the bill provides in statute that notice is not required when two or more members of a board are gathered if no official acts are taken and no public business is discussed. The committee voted favorably on this bill.

Following this, Senator Bean introduced Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 882, which would make the Florida Secretary of State a statewide elected office as of June 1, 2019, and makes the Secretary a member of the Florida Cabinet. The Governor will appoint a person to serve as the Secretary of State until January 3, 2023. That appointment is subject to confirmation by the Senate. Beginning in 2022, and every four years thereafter, the Secretary of State will be elected concurrently with the other members of the Florida Cabinet. The Joint Resolution specifically directs the Legislature to enact implementing legislation by June 1, 2019. If passed by a three-fifths vote in each chamber of the Legislature, the proposal will be voted on at the general election in November 2018; a sixty percent majority is required for approval. Our Committee voted favorably on the resolution with a 7-0 vote. Finally, to close the meeting I introduced my bill, SB 954, detailed above, which passed favorably.

Commerce and Tourism

The Commerce and Tourism committee met on Monday afternoon to consider four bills. The first was SB 380 by Senator Mayfield regarding unsafe tires. Senator Mayfield's bill will make it a violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act for any person to install an unsafe tire on an automobile or light truck. The bill lists definitions of unsafe tires. This bill will not affect private consumers purchasing and installing their own tires. Our committee voted favorably on this bill.

The second bill presented was SB 664 by Senator Bean regarding a sales and use tax exemption on certain personal property related to disaster preparedness. The exemption will be limited to a five-day period at the beginning of Hurricane season from 12:01 am on May 30, 2017 to 11:59 p.m. on June 5, 2017. The list of exempted items includes self-powered lighting and radios, fuel tanks, and batteries among other things. All items on the list have a maximum price limit. Our committee voted favorably on the bill as the committee hopes to make disaster preparedness a priority for all of our Florida citizens.

Senator Gibson presented SB 440, a bill regarding the forms of identification a Notary Public may rely on. The bill expands the list of forms of ID to include a Veteran Health Identification Card issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill passed favorably.

The final bill presented in our committee was SB 498 by Senator Young. This technical bill modifies provisions of several areas regulated by the Department of Agriculture. The full list of its effects can be found by [clicking here](#). Senator Young's bill was voted favorably.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development

On Wednesday the Appropriations subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development met. Chairman Brandes proposed budget restrictions for Fiscal Year 2017-2018; Senator Grimsley presented her bill SB 164, Certificates of Title for Motor Vehicles, and SB 7010 was presented by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Senator Grimsley's bill prohibits the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) and tax collectors from charging a surviving spouse any fee or service charge, excluding an expedited title fee, if applicable, for a motor vehicle certificate of title when the title is being issued solely to remove the deceased co-owner from the title. The bill passed favorably.

SB 7010 amends s. 250.115, F.S., to save from repeal the Florida Department of Military Affairs direct-support organization which is currently scheduled to repeal on October 1, 2017. The direct-support organization is a Florida non-profit corporation that operates exclusively to raise funds and request and receive grants, gifts, and

bequests of moneys. It supports the processing or requests for assistance from the Soldiers and Airmen Assistance Program or similar programs, as directed by the adjutant general. Finally, it makes expenditures for the direct or indirect benefit of the DMA or the Florida National Guard. The committee voted favorably on this bill.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

On Wednesday afternoon our subcommittee met to hear the Chair's proposal for budget reductions, as well as to receive presentations from the Health Policy Committee on SB 7006 and from the Military and Veterans Affairs Department regarding SB 7008, which I have mentioned above.

The Health Policy bill removes a repeal date of October 1, 2017 and re-enacts authority for the Department of Health to establish and contract with a direct-support organization for fundraising and support of the prescription drug-monitoring program (PDMP). The bill also removes references to an obsolete Program Implementation and Oversight Task Force created upon enactment of the PDMP in 2009. Both SB 7008 and SB 7006 were voted favorably.

Other Legislative News:

Religious Expression

On Monday, Senator Baxley presented SB 436 to the Senate education meeting. The bill creates the "Florida Student and School Personnel Religious Liberties Act," and specifies that a school district may not discriminate against a student, parent, or school personnel based on a religious viewpoint or religious expression. The bill authorizes students to express their religious beliefs in written and oral assignments free from discrimination, wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display religious messages, and pray or engage in and organize religious activities before, during, and after school hours to the same extent that engagement in secular activities is permitted. The bill also requires a school district to comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and specifies that a school district may not prevent school personnel from participating in religious activities on school grounds that are student-initiated at reasonable times before or after the school day. It requires the school districts to give a religious group access to the same school facilities for assembling as given to a secular group without discrimination and authorizes such a religious or secular group to advertise or announce its meetings. Finally, the bill requires schools to adopt a policy that establishes a limited public forum for student speakers at any school event at which a student is to speak publicly. The bill passed favorably in the committee.

Excellence in Higher Education Act

During Floor Session , the Senate passed Senate Bill 2, the Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act. This comprehensive legislation will boost the strength and competitiveness of our state's higher education system as our primary economic engine to drive vibrant, sustainable economic development and growth in high-

paying jobs. This legislation's primary objectives include working with universities to hold them accountable to the taxpayers and better serve the student population.

When the top Florida students attend our universities, complete their degree on time, and graduate with job opportunities in high-demand fields, Florida taxpayers will see the worthwhile return on investment our state needs. By increasing need and merit-based financial assistance for university students and requiring universities to create flexible tuition policies, we can improve Florida's 4-year graduation rate, which means cost savings for students and their families. Together with policy enhancements and funding investments that support university efforts to recruit and retain renowned faculty, improve facilities, and enhance professional schools; this legislation will help elevate the national reputation of Florida's state universities, and further increase the return on investment for students, parents, and taxpayers.

Senate Bill 2 prioritizes on-time graduation as a goal for our system of higher education, while still recognizing that, for a variety of reasons, not all students will be able to complete their programs within the traditional timetable. The legislation also makes it clear that schools are only evaluated on the graduation rates of our traditional, full-time, first-time-in-college students. No student is penalized in any way by this policy. This pro-student legislation supports students by removing barriers to graduation and helping ease financial insecurities that lead students to delay completing their degrees.

Legislation to Reduce Criminalization of Adolescents Advances The Florida Senate

Appropriations Subcommittee on Civil and Criminal Justice passed Senate Bill 196, Juvenile Civil Citation and Similar Diversion Programs. In too many cases, law enforcement officers are brought in to referee the day-to-day challenges of raising children. This legislation seeks an appropriate balance between public safety and decriminalizing the mistakes of adolescents. Senate Bill 196 requires a law enforcement officer to issue a civil citation or require the juvenile's participation in a diversion program when the juvenile admits to committing certain first-time misdemeanor offenses including: possession of alcoholic beverages, criminal mischief, trespass, and disorderly conduct, among others. Under Senate Bill 196, a law enforcement officer must provide written documentation articulating why an arrest is warranted when he or she has the discretion to issue a civil citation, but instead chooses to arrest the juvenile. The legislation also specifies that the option of the issuance of a civil citation or referral to a similar diversion program does not apply to a juvenile who is alleged to have committed, currently charged with, has plead guilty to, or has been convicted of a felony, or a misdemeanor offense arising out of an episode in which the juvenile is also alleged to have committed a felony.

News

[Cameron Mayhew, struck and killed at bus stop, gets bill in Legislature](#)

[Click here to read online](#)

Sherry Stevens spent the last nine months trying to relearn how to live since her 16-year-old son died.

Cameron Mayhew died on June 2, a day after 23-year-old driver Zackery Treinen hit him as the Fort Myers High student walked to his waiting bus on Pine Ridge Road in south Fort Myers.

"It's like starting all over, learning all over," said Stevens, 52. "Everything is different. Every day is a heartache."

Treinen received a \$1,000 fine and had his license suspended for six months after Mayhew's death. He was sentenced in September. The light sentence left Stevens and Mayhew's father perplexed.

Now, State Rep. Dane Eagle, R-Cape Coral, and State Sen. Kathleen Passidomo, R-Naples, have filed identical bills to stiffen penalties for drivers who fail to stop for school buses and cause serious harm.

The measure was requested by Matthew Mayhew, Cameron's father. Passidomo filed her Senate bill March 3 and Eagle filed his bill Sunday. The bill calls for drivers to attend a victim's impact panel, 120 hours of community service in a trauma center or a hospital that receives victims of vehicle accidents and a \$1,500 fine.

"No parent should have to endure the loss of a child, especially in such a heartbreaking manner as the Mayhew family lost Cameron," Eagle said in a news release. "In this case, it is clear our laws were insufficient to appropriately address the circumstances of this tragic incident."

Passidomo said passing the legislation could avoid a tragedy like this in the future.

That's what Stevens hopes for, she said.

"The last thing I want is for another parent to be standing where I am," she said. "Awareness and strict penalties are going to save lives."

There's nothing positive that can come from Mayhew's death, Stevens said.

"Perhaps it's that his death wasn't in vain," she said. "Perhaps he can save other lives."

Constituent Corner

Last week I met with constituents who are in charge of the Collier County Fair. We discussed their initiatives and plan for the fair this year.



If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact my office.
Thank you, and I look forward to continue serving as your State Senator!