



## *Week One- March 8, 2019*

The 2019 legislative session has begun .... fast paced... new administration, new legislators....new sheriff in town.....56 days left, but who's counting.....

This is a year of transition as the state welcomes a new Governor, Cabinet, Senate President and House Speaker. This session is sure to be one full of action and drama as the legislature develops the state budget while contending with various issues such as: guns, environment, marijuana, gambling, education, health care, and Hurricane Michael recovery.

Governor DeSantis opened the legislative session Tuesday, with a State of the State address during which he outlined top issues he plans to take action on in his first year as governor: schools, the environment, illegal immigration and foreign policy. He has proposed a \$91.3 billion budget for the fiscal year proposing an increase for education, water-quality projects and trim taxes.

Senate President Bill Galvano made opening remarks on his priority, which is state transportation, and urged lawmakers to work together. The House Speaker made remarks explaining his focus on a wide range of health regulations and called for an overhaul of the higher-education budget. The two houses have differing views of the higher education budget, ensuring a struggle over higher education funding.

Legislators will also grapple with recovery costs for Hurricane Michael. The state has already spent \$1.13 billion on hurricane recovery and the total could go as high as \$2.7 billion. Federal funding to reimburse the state has been slow, requiring the state to spend down their reserves.

Senate Appropriations Chair, Rob Bradley stated, **“It’s going to be a very tight budget year.”**

Tuesday, Florida 4-H State Officers spoke before the Senate Committee for Environment and Natural Resources about the 4-H Program and visited with legislators discussing our budget request.

Wednesday was Florida Farm Bureau Day with a great Taste of Florida Reception. Many thanks to the Florida Farm Bureau members who were in town this week, walking the hallways of the Capital, talking to legislators and staff about their priorities, which included IFAS.

Our budget priorities this session include:

- Workload - \$3.8M.
- 4H Programs - \$1.9M
- Immokalee Research Fields - \$1.2M
- Tropical Research/Education Center - \$2.4M
- Horticulture Research and Education \$1,522,885
- Tropical Aquaculture Lab \$ 806,234
- Geomatics Education \$ 656,931



**March 15, 2019**

*Week 2 .....feels like 10.....*

It's been a busy, but outstanding week here in Tallahassee!

Tuesday, UF President Fuchs was in town and we hosted the legislators who are members of the Gator Caucus for an open house at our UF Government Relations office.

Wednesday, **four of our appropriations request bills passed** out of the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee. We appreciate our many stakeholders who were present during the committee meeting to register their support.

*Special thanks to the Florida Cattlemen's Association and Southeast Milk for their support Wednesday, in committee and visiting with legislators and staff about their priorities, which included IFAS.*

Thursday, lawmakers received the final general revenue forecast which estimated to be \$7.4 Million less than expected in December, which means legislators will have less money to spend in crafting its budget.

We are truly off to a great start, as passing four bills in a day is a big deal on its own. The meeting on Wednesday was significant as it was the last scheduled meeting to hear funding requests in the appropriations subcommittees. According to House rules, projects that are not passed in committee cannot be included in the House budget bill.

The appropriations projects approved in House Higher Education committee included:

- ✓ STEM, Workforce & Student 4H Programs
- ✓ Tropical Aquaculture Lab
- ✓ Upgrade/Repair Student Research Fields, Immokalee
- ✓ Horticulture Research & Education

We have been lobbying the Senate simultaneously. If we can get our budget requests in the Senate budget, even the ones that were not heard in the House can be included in the budget conference negotiations. We are hearing that we could see the first proposed budgets in the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees **as early as next week**. At that point, we will know where we need to work the hardest.



**Week 3- March 21, 2019**

*The budget is out, it's not good...but we are still in the game!*

It's been a tough week as the House and Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittees rolled out the first draft of their budget proposals. The two Houses have proposed two very different budgets, so it appears the legislative strategy is to use the budget to fight the policy battle...again.

The House Higher Education subcommittee's proposed budget cut \$135 million from the State University System and all 12 universities received a 2.5% cut to their base budget. The good news is the UF/IFAS Research and Extension base budget was **not impacted by this cut**. The bad news is UF/IFAS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences **will be impacted**.

Also, very few projects were funded and most of those that were, received a fraction of the requested amount. The only IFAS project included in the House budget proposal was \$50,000 for the Tropical Aquaculture Lab (the request was for over \$800,000).

The House Ag & Natural Resources budget dealt a blow as it eliminated funding for the Quarantine Facility in Ft. Pierce and Invasive Exotic Plants research.

In contrast, the Senate Education Subcommittee proposed a system increase of 1.4%. However, Performance funding took a \$35 million cut and only 16 university projects were funded. Of the 16, **UF/IFAS received funding for two projects**: Workload at the full requested amount of \$3.9 million and partial funding for 4H programs at \$100,000 (\$1,943,200 requested).

At this point, we have a number of our budget items in at least one of the budget proposals. **The fact that we have projects in one of the budgets is more important than the amount at this point, as they are considered placeholders, making them eligible to be a part of the budget conference negotiations. During that process, we will be laser-focused on getting the numbers increased and projects included that have been left out or zeroed out.** The good news is we are still in play and we can work to get those projects in the proposed budget to the original amounts and get the others not included in. *Budget Chart attached.*

Next week, the House and Senate appropriations committees are expected to hear their budget bills which will consist of the subcommittees recommended budgets combined.

A big thank you to Dr. Jamie Ellis who gave an impressive "Update on Florida's Bee Population" presentation in the Senate Agriculture Committee. The presentation was extremely well received by all senators on the committee and highlighted the great work being done at our Honey Bee Research and Extension Laboratory.





**March 28, 2019**

*Week 4, things are heating up in the capitol..*

The Senate and House passed their budgets out of the full appropriations committees this week. The two proposed budgets should reach the chambers next week for a floor vote. There were some changes from the subcommittee proposed budgets heard the week before to the full appropriations committee budgets.

Monday, the Senate filed 137 amendments to its proposed budget, while the house opted not to take up any amendments to their bill. Our position improved slightly in the senate budget bill, but there is still a heavy lift between where we are now and where we need to be in the final budget. Negotiations between the House and the Senate will dominate the remaining legislative session.

Next Wednesday, both the House and the Senate will be on the floor to discuss the budget bills. Shortly after the bills pass through their respective chambers, a budget conference committee will be appointed by leadership to negotiate the budget issues. During negotiations, legislators will trade offers on specific line-items and language until they agree on the exact same budget.

The Senate has proposed a \$90.3 billion budget while the House has proposed an \$ 88.9 billion budget. The different between the House and Senate budget is \$1.4 billion with a variety of differences in funding for education, health care, mental health, affordable housing, hurricane response, transportation and the environment.



We were fortunate to have the opportunity to have the Florida 4H Officers invited to present for the third time during this legislative session. Monday, 4H officers appeared in front of the Senate Agriculture committee and delivered a very impressive presentation about the Florida 4-H program.

*For those of you who are wondering... this is what the cool kids look like in the capitol... well kinda*



*Week 5, It's Hump Week - we're halfway there....*

This week the Senate and House passed competing budgets and have set the stage for a challenging budget negotiation process. The Senate bill passed 40-0, and the House bill passed 105-8.

Now that the budgets have passed both chambers, legislators are making preparations for the budget conference process. It's almost like starting over. Just as they did before building their respective budget proposals, now the House and Senate have to agree on how much money to provide for each section or silo of the budget such as education, transportation, health care, etc.

You never use the word "always" or "never" when talking about the legislative process but typically, the conference committee will be appointed shortly before or after allocations are determined.

As the budget process is always unpredictable, negotiations over the allocations could drag out over the next two weeks or be out as early as next week.

As for now, we are still in the same place as last week and no better, no worse.

On a lighter note, nearly 800 Florida 4-H youth were in town Thursday for 4-H Day at the Capitol. We were fortunate to have Senator Kelli Stargel and Commissioner Nikki Fried speak to the 4H group at open and closing ceremonies and Representative Tomkow recognize officers on the House floor. As usual, the 4H did a great job and made us proud. We want to extend a big THANK YOU to all those who participated and covered the state capitol in green.

**You can follow our session adventures on the [UF Institute of Food and Governmental Affairs Facebook page!](#)**



## *Week 6, April 12, 2019...still waiting*

The House and the Senate stayed busy this week focusing on policy as we are in a waiting pattern on the budget. Long committee meetings were scheduled to hear many of the bills, as the end of session is in three short weeks (*or three very loonnng weeks, depending on your perspective*). Meanwhile, the House and Senate covered a lot of ground during multiple sessions addressing a long list of policies on the floor.

With the focus on policy this week, we are still waiting to hear when leadership has agreed to the new allocations of funding to the budget silos so the budget conference process can begin.

Some of the hot button issues to watch going into allocations are education, Environment, mental health, Visit Florida and Gaming. These silos take a large portion of the budget pie and the two chambers' proposals are very far apart promising, let's just say a dynamic conference.

**EDUCATION:** The Senate's stance, would increase K-12 per-student funding 4.71 percent, which would be \$350 more per student. The House increase 2.75 percent, with \$167 more per student. In higher education, the house proposes a cut of \$135 million from the State University System and all 12 universities received a 2.5% cut to their base budget. The Senate increases funding by 1.4% for universities, but cuts performance funding by \$35 million.

**ENVIRONMENT:** The Governor asked lawmakers for \$625 million to fund environmental issues such as Everglades restoration, water quality, springs protection and Florida Forever program. The Senate bill is \$31 million higher than the governor's request, while the House budget plan is \$18 million less.

**SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:** The House budget remains the same as last year at \$69 million, but the Senate increases school mental health service funding to \$100 million.

**VISIT FLORIDA:** The battle over reauthorization of Visit Florida, the state's tourism promotion office, has the House, Senate and Governor's office at odds. The governor requested full funding at \$76 million. The Senate preserves Visit Florida operating past October at \$50 million, but the House closes down Visit Florida by October, at \$19 million. House leaders have repeatedly taken aim at Visit Florida in recent years, sparking heated battles with sometimes prolific impacts to the budget.

**GAMING:** With three and a half weeks left in the Legislative Session, the Senate is getting closer to a comprehensive gambling bill that could include a new revenue-sharing deal with the Seminole Tribe. This is a very important issue as it means \$350 million annually for the state budget.





*Week 7, April 18, 2019...the waiting game*

The House and the Senate stayed busy this week focusing on policy as we are in a waiting pattern on the budget. The Senate held session for 2.5 hours and the house remained in session from 11:30 until 10:45 pm passing and discussing policy.

With another week focused on policy, we are still waiting to hear when leadership has agreed on allocations of funding. We expect allocations to be out soon because the budget has to be proofed and printed.

The legislature is required to wait 72 hours after the final budget is released so everyone has a chance to review the 400 + page document before voting on it. In order to adjourn on time, the budget has to be finalized and released by Tuesday April 30<sup>th</sup>.



### *Week 8, April 24, 2019... it's a little tense up here*

The budget conference negotiations officially began yesterday as a general agreement has been reached for total spending levels in areas ranging from education to health care to transportation, but numerous details on exactly where the money goes still must be worked out.

At 8:30 last night, the Ag Appropriations Conference Committee released their first run of budget numbers. Fortunately, the Senate offer maintained the funding for the IFAS programs funded through the agriculture budget, at the current level, as opposed to the elimination of funding proposed by the House agriculture budget.

However, at the committee meeting this morning, the House did not move to the Senate position on our programs so we remain in a waiting pattern.

The Higher Education Conference Committee met at 8:45 p.m. There has been some positive movement as the House has increased its higher education spending plan by \$136 million, moving more toward the Senate's position on funding for universities and colleges. Our IFAS items the Higher education budget have yet to change. Meanwhile, we are working behind the scenes with our sponsors to move our position forward.

Initially, the House higher education budget included a \$100 million cut in base funding for universities and a \$20 million cut in pre-eminence funding. But now, the house cut has been reduced to \$35.3 million for university base funding.

Subcommittees have until Thursday to iron out those details. The items on which they cannot agree will be bumped up to the House and Senate budget chairs. If the two chairs reach a stalemate, any remaining issues will be bumped up to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House.

The legislature cannot vote on the final budget for 72 hours after it has been released to allow for review. The clock is ticking as they must finalize the budget by Tuesday, in order to vote on the bill by May 3, when the legislative session is scheduled to end.





### **April 26, 2019- Budget Update**

**Well, guess what we're doing this weekend.....**

Budget negotiations continue with a chance of finishing this weekend. The higher education budget has improved as well as the IFAS budget numbers but we have a ways to go.

The budget subcommittees have been working on their portions of the budget since Tuesday. The Agriculture Budget Conference Committee met last night at 8:45 and three of the four IFAS agriculture programs were restored to their funding levels in the budget. This morning, that offer was accepted so it's considered finalized.

- Invasive Exotics Quarantine Facility
- IFAS Invasive Exotics Plant Research
- LakeWatch

The Higher Education Budget Conference Committee met this morning and added \$879,500 non-recurring to our Workload request putting us at a total of \$1,476,561. That's certainly an improvement, but we are still working to increase funding to the full amount of \$ 3,874,528.

We are also still working on funding for 4-H, Horticulture, Geomatics and Tropical Aquaculture.

Today, all issues that have not been agreed upon were bumped up to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees Chairmen. They will work through the weekend to resolve the remaining issues but will bump any unresolved issues to the Senate President and Speaker of the House.

We are waiting for the next conference committee meeting, which could happen anytime. They have until Tuesday to finalize the budget negotiations in order to be able to vote on the budget by next Friday, when the legislative session is scheduled to end.

It's time to cross your fingers, get out your rabbits foot, wish upon a star, throw your pennies in a wishing well, pray or whatever works for you.....we need the help.



**FYIFAS May 1, 2019**

*The budget is done and the ink is drying.....but session will NOT end on time (insert heavy sigh)*

After a long budget conference, filled with hours of tedium and interspersed with moments of terror, the appropriations chairs agreed to a budget of about \$90 billion. However, the legislative session will not end on time.

By law, the budget has a mandatory 72-hour waiting period to allow legislators to review the 400 plus page document before they can vote on it. The final budget conference meeting ended late last night, so the budget could not be published in time to be able to vote on Friday, so session will be extended to Saturday.

Unfortunately, this was not a good year for higher education. In the education silo, the legislature focused more heavily on K-12 schools, appropriating a \$21.8 billion increase. This is a \$782.9 million increase over the current year, which translating into a \$243 increase per student.

All universities received cuts to their base budgets and little of their funding requests were granted. However, UF and IFAS fared well in comparison.

After a strong start, our final budget is significantly less than what we asked for, but to put things into perspective, at one point we were losing over \$500,000. Now, we have \$1,750,000 in new funding with one small loss.

The final conference report includes \$1 million in recurring funds for Workload, which funds our base to pay for research and Extension programs. It also includes \$750,000 in non-recurring funds for the Florida 4-H program.

Of the four programs the House proposed to cut, we were able to save the Invasive Exotics Quarantine Facility, the IFAS Invasive Exotics Plant Research Program and Lakewatch. Our only cut was the Cooperative Aquatic Plant Education Program.

Unfortunately, UF received a cut to their base of just under \$6 million, which will impact the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs).

We will continue to monitor the budget until final passage.

Despite the losses, we're calling this session a victory! The reason we were successful is due to the efforts of many who helped us and we want to send out a heartfelt thank you!! I can't name them all, but a number of legislators and their staff went to bat for us and persisted to the last minute. We also had support from stakeholders, and associations including:

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association

Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Florida Cattlemen's Association

Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association

Florida 4-H students and volunteers

Florida Mosquito Control Association

Until next year.....