



## WEEK ONE – January 11, 2018

The 2018 legislative session has begun and it promises to be....well, ummm...let's just say interesting.

Despite a growing economy, the Florida Legislature could wind up spending the next two months in yet another round of budget battles. The opening day of session brought assurances from legislative leaders that they can quickly find agreement on key issues. Yet there were still signs of some of the same opposing views that kept the state budget in question right up until the last week of the fiscal year.

The annual budget forecast projected a very minimal surplus of \$52 million. (*For an \$80 billion budget, that's kind of like the sprinkles on top of an ice cream cone.*) But, that came out before Hurricane Irma ripped across the state. While Florida expects to get reimbursed from the federal government, the state has been forced to pay nearly \$1 billion storm-related expenses. Another potential problem is that money for the state's children's health insurance program could run out in March if Congress doesn't authorize additional federal funding.

However, the good news is that historically, during years in which a number of elected officials are expected to be on the ballot, there is greater pressure to wrap up the legislative session on time.

During his opening day address, Senate President Joe Negron, went over a list of his top priorities, which included an overhaul of higher education that would permanently boost spending on Florida's Bright Futures scholarships, which go to the state's top-performing high school students.

House Speaker Richard Corcoran, gave a fiery speech during, which he declared "we are the storm" and the "house of reformers". He outlined his top priorities, including a bill that would allow bullied students to go to private schools at taxpayer expense. Corcoran vowed that the House would never use a rise in local property values to boost school funding. House Republicans say that's tantamount to a tax increase, since higher property values usually trigger higher taxes.

But, Negron defended the practice, calling school funding a state-local "partnership." He also promised the Senate would address the state's opioid crisis and pass legislation to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.

Governor Rick Scott's budget recommendations call for spending more on issues from schools to the environment. However, some of the governor's recommendations could spark a tug-of-war with the Legislature.

But, our Kevlar suits are in the mail. We're good.

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*Commemorative Special Edition, January 12, 2018*

*So, I actually have some good news...*

After setting the stage for what the 2018 legislative session, I wanted to send out a special addendum to dedicate to strictly good news.

**House Bill 3299**, which is the request to restore the \$1 million of **4-H funding passed** its first hurdle this week, when the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve it.

Although this is just one small piece of the journey this request will have to make in order to be reinstated, it was very significant for a number of reasons.

First, in most cases, it will be harder to get projects that were vetoed through the budget process. Historically, legislators consider vetoed projects a lost cause as they usually are most likely to get vetoed again. However, this year is a bit different due to the fact that such a large portion of the higher education budget was vetoed.

Also, there are over 1,300 appropriations projects filed in the House totaling over \$2.2 billion. That's a lot of competition. There is far too little time to hear all, but a fraction of the requests. So this was a true victory and some much needed encouragement.

I do want to send out a big thanks to Nick Place, Dean of Extension and Michael Gutter, Associate Dean and Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development for spending the day with us, walking the halls of the Capitol, talking to committee members and staff prior to the meeting.



**January 19, 2018**

*Week 2 and we're still in the game...*

It's been an exceptional week for IFAS! Today, we passed four appropriations request bills out of the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

Passing four bills in a day is a big deal on its own. However, today's meeting was critical because it was the last chance for funding requests to be heard in appropriations subcommittees. (*We've been sweatin' bullets.*) According to House rules adopted last year, if a project doesn't get approved by a committee, it cannot be included in the state budget.

Our priority this year is to get funds that were vetoed last year back into the budget. The appropriations projects approved in committee today included:

- ✓ FL Ag Initiative
- ✓ Geomatics Education Program
- ✓ Tropical Aquaculture Lab
- ✓ Tropical Research & Education Center Upgrades and Repairs

In addition, on Wednesday we passed Horticulture Research, Science and Technology; and the Public Information Education Center (PIE) and funding for the mosquito lab in Vero Beach.

We are truly off to a great start. However, this was just the first hurdle in the budget process.

We have been lobbying the Senate simultaneously, but we can't predict what will be in the first budget proposals.

We are hearing that we could see the first proposed list of budget numbers in the Appropriations Subcommittees **as early as next week**. At that point, we will know where we need to work the hardest.

We have had a lot of support from our stakeholders. Many thanks to the Florida Cattlemen's Association and Southeast Milk who were in town this week, walking the hallways of the Capital, talking to legislators and staff about their priorities, which included IFAS.





**January 24, 2018**

The past two days, the House and Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittees rolled out their budget recommendations for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. With a gap of more than \$600 million dollars between the two budgets, bringing them together will be a real challenge.

Yesterday, was not a good day for higher education as the chairman proposed a \$217 million cut in the State University System's carry-forward funding, \$100 million of which would be recurring.

Unfortunately, that meant bad news for IFAS as only two of our projects made it into the budget recommendations - the **Geomatics Education Program** and the **Horticulture Research, Science and Technology program, which includes funding for PIE.**

However, today, the Senate Higher Education Subcommittee proposed a \$383 million increase in funding. As a result, five of the IFAS projects made it into their proposed budget at partial funding levels.

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

At this point, most of our budget items are in one or both of the budget proposals. This is good news as it means our projects are still in play and we can work to get them up to their original amounts.

Higher education is shaping up to be a major bargaining chip during the budget negotiation process.

**Projects included in one of the budget proposals:**

- ✓ Florida 4-H
- ✓ FL Ag Initiative
- ✓ Horticulture Research, Science and Education
- ✓ Geomatics Education Program
- ✓ Tropical Aquaculture Lab
- ✓ Zika (Mosquito Lab)

**Projects not included in a budget proposal:**

- ✓ Tropical Research & Education Center Upgrades and Repairs
- ✓ Workload
- ✓ Veterinary Diagnostics Lab



**February 1, 2018**

*Week 4, still in the game but we're limping a little bit...*

This week the Senate and House passed their budgets out of their full appropriations committees so the two proposed budget should reach the chamber next week for a vote.

The Senate has proposed an \$87.3 billion budget while the House has proposed an \$87.2 billion budget. In comparison, Gov. Rick Scott has proposed \$87.4 billion for the 2018-2019 budget.

House Appropriations Chairman Carlos Trujillo, said although the bill is substantially larger than the current budget of less than \$84 billion, much of the increase was driven by state spending on hurricane recovery, funding for approximately 30,000 new public-school students and increases in Floridians using Medicaid, the state-federal health care program for the poor and disabled.

Increasing funding for state colleges and universities has been on Senate President Joe Negrón's priority list since he began his tenure as the leader of the Senate last year. Unfortunately, his goal of increasing spending for the state university system is not in line with the House's budget numbers.

But unlike the Senate, the House's education budget proposes cuts to the state university system, potentially forcing them to tap into their reserves for extra money. There is a \$600 million difference in the two budget proposals for education which promises to be a real challenge to reach an agreement during the budget conference negotiations.

This week the Florida Farm Bureau visited the Capitol to talk to legislators about their priorities for this session. We are extremely grateful to them for providing some much needed support for the IFAS budget as we have some truly heavy lifting ahead in order to get the IFAS budget requests up to the needed dollar amounts.

*Stay tuned, we're almost half-way there.*



**February 9, 2018**

*Week 5, We're halfway there...*

The House and Senate passed competing budgets Thursday of more than \$87 billion, setting up negotiations between the chambers to resolve vast differences over K-12 schools, higher education, environmental and health care spending.

Both budgets are more than \$2 billion above current spending when anticipated expenditures through June 30 are added, including recovery costs from Hurricane Irma.

While the two chambers are spending roughly the same, they are not spending the same amount in key areas, including on environmental programs, public schools and on state universities.

The main sticking point between the chambers is likely to be in education. The higher education portion of the budget is over \$600 million apart with the Senate increasing funding by nearly \$400 million for state universities, and the House reducing their funding by \$216 million.

The IFAS funding requests are also vastly different in the two budgets. None of the amounts are the same in both budgets with Horticulture/PIE research funding being the only request that made it into both budgets - but at different amounts. The good news is that most of our issues are still in play and we can work to improve the numbers during the budget conference negotiations. It will be a heavy lift and we will need a little help from our friends.

At this point, a budget conference committee will be appointed to begin the negotiation of a long line of differences in the two budget bills. During negotiations, legislators will trade offers on specific line-items and language until they agree on the exact same budget.

The Senate acknowledged the budget bills are “are wildly opposite,” but the Senate proposal is designed to spur a policy debate.

Senate leadership has said they expect the chambers to begin discussing the allocations process and how they will move forward with budget negotiations next week.

The work on the two budgets cannot begin until both sides agree on how to allocate funding to each budget silo; education, transportation, environment etc. Those decisions could take two days or two weeks.

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**February 23, 2018**

*Week 7, We may be here awhile...*

With two weeks left in the legislative session, the budget has stalled.

Budget negotiations had stalled after the House and Senate passed their budgets during week 5 of the regular session. However, budget negotiations ceased as the legislature completely shifted their focus after the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School last week.

It was a week for the history books as about 2,000 students converged on the state capitol to urge legislators to pass more restrictive gun bills. There were press conferences and rallies, chants and signs.

In response to the tragedy both chambers began working on language that may include issues such as substantial increases in money for mental health programs and school resource officers, as well as age limits, waiting periods for assault rifles, and a program to arm school personnel.

Legislators will have a significant challenge to reapportion the budget in order to meet this unplanned for cost mid-way through the budget process.

House leadership has raised the prospect of an extended Session due to a lack of progress on the budget. However, Senate leaders have said they are optimistic that an agreement can be reached on the \$87 billion budget in time to avoid running overtime.

As the budget process is always unpredictable, we are waiting to hear when leadership has agreed to the new allocations of money to the budget silos so the budget conference process can begin. It could be as soon as Monday, but could drag out for days.

**Meanwhile, lobbyists, constituents and stakeholders are taking this time to talk to legislators and hopefully solidify their place in the budget.**

It's definitely been a busy, crazy, and emotional week, but it ended on a high note as we had nearly 800 Florida 4-H youth in town Thursday for 4-H day at the Capitol. As usual, they 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.

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**February 26, 2018**  
**Week 8, The clock is ticking...**

At 7:30 last night, the budget conference process officially began, but the legislators are working with nearly \$700 million less than they appropriated in the House and Senate budgets.

Last Friday, was a very expensive day for the state of Florida. The task of ironing out what’s shaping up to be about an \$87 billion budget isn’t easy under the best of circumstances. But last week, the Revenue Estimating Conference reported there will be \$167 million less in revenues from corporate taxes. There is also a \$100 million bill to pay for Medicaid. When you add the \$400 million being set aside for the school safety that leaves legislators with significantly less money than they had to work with a week ago.

Over the weekend, House and Senate leadership worked on negotiating how much money to allocate to each of the various silos.

The budget is broken down by category and agency, and under each of those are various programs and entities. Legislators will be adding and subtracting dollars, until they come up with something both the House and Senate—and enough members in each, can agree on.

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.

**We have some heavy lifting to get IFAS funding up to where we need it. Most of our budget requests made it into one of the two proposed budgets but only two of them were fully funded. Those that were included will be included in the negotiations of a 400 + page, \$87 billion budget.**

PROJECT NAME	REQUESTED	HOUSE	SENATE
Workload	\$3,705,379	\$0	\$0
4-H	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$250,000
Tropical Aquaculture Lab	\$778,987	\$0	\$500,000
Horticulture/PIE	\$1,450,000	\$1,450,000	\$250,000
Geomatics Education	\$636,120	\$636,120	\$0
FL Ag Initiative	\$125,000	\$0	\$250,000
Infrastructure for Zika Research	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$400,000
Tropical Research Education Center	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$0
Vet Med Lab	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$100,000

**In response to many requests, the members of the Budget Conference Committee are listed below.**





**March 1, 2018**

*Week 8, This is not good..*

The budget conference process officially began yesterday with appropriations subcommittees making their first offers. That means they list the lines in the budget they agree and disagree on.

Unfortunately, things are just getting worse. We were completely taken by surprise last night when the House's first offer zeroed out Horticulture/PIE funding, which was originally fully funded in the House budget bill. At this point, other items remain the same, as in the chart we released yesterday.

The House's first offer totaled \$7.9 billion, about \$44 million less than the Senate's budget bill. The bulk of the differences are between university and college spending.

We are waiting for the next conference committee meeting, during which the Senate will present their counter offer. This could happen anytime.

The appropriations conference subcommittees have until Friday morning to work out the differences in the Senate and House budget bills. At that point, the budget issues that the committee has not agreed on will be "bumped" to the Senate and House Appropriations Committee Chairmen.

The Appropriation Chairmen have until Sunday, at which point any unresolved budget issues will be "bumped" to the Senate President and Speaker of the House for final resolution.

All issues must be worked out in time to proof and print the budget (make available on internet) by Tuesday, in order to vote on the bill on Friday, as they cannot vote on the budget until it has been available to review for 72 hours.

**The clock is ticking and we are running out of time. We will be working the Conference Committee members, letting them know UF/IFAS funding is in bad shape and we need their support. Conference Committee members are attached.**

*Everybody pray, wish upon a star, cross your fingers... anything you got!*



March 9, 2018

Week 9,

The budget conference process has officially ended, a budget bill has been released, and the legislature will vote on it Sunday. **It wasn't a very good year for IFAS.**

The legislators who sponsored our budget requests worked hard for us and were successful in getting some funding for most of our projects in the budget proposals. But, all of the funding for our legislative budget requests was **zeroed out of the budget report Wednesday night.**

Senator Denise Grimsley and Representative Lawrence McClure went to leadership late Wednesday night and fought to get 4-H money put back in the budget. Fortunately, they were able to get \$500,000 of **non-recurring** funding put back in the budget bill.

This demonstrates just how critical it is to have relationships with people who can and will go to the mat for IFAS at the 11th hour.

So, what happened? Why weren't we able to get the funding back for these successful programs that are important to our stakeholders? There were so many things that went wrong this session that we had absolutely no control over. I cannot list them all but, the ones I can include: a large bill for hurricane damage, a desperate need for funding for school safety, a growing Medicaid expense and sluggish corporate taxes.

Our next hurdle will be surviving the veto process. We have been working extensively with the Governor's budget staff, **but we need to let them know that our funding is important to a many.**

Nonetheless, IFAS lives to fight another day. Next year, we will start all over with a hopefully healthier budget. We will ask the legislature for the resources to maintain and grow the projects that serve this state so well. Included in our objectives will be to ask for 4-H funds again as the money we will receive next year will not recur the following year.

Despite the outcome, we want you to know how much we appreciate all of you who supported IFAS this session. Grassroots makes a difference and we really needed you this year. You came through and, as always, we are much better for it.

*Mary Ann Hooks*

**IFAS Budget Update May 19, 2021**

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