

Representative Mark Pafford's DISTRICT 86 UPDATE:

FROM THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



STATE REP. MARK PAFFORD

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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Serving you in the Florida House of Representatives is a tremendous honor. With this newsletter, I hope to update you on our work in Tallahassee during the 2014 Legislative Session.

With your phone calls, emails and other correspondence, I was reminded of the important trust and hope you place in your elected officials. Though I did not agree with all the legislation that was approved, I worked hard to serve you by the way I voted, debated and worked with my colleagues.

The Legislature took on important issues confronting Florida and passed a new state budget. Together with my colleagues, we made progress toward strengthening the economy. We passed legislation to protect our most vulnerable residents, but there is still much to be done to ensure that our public schools have the funding they need.

While some critical issues were addressed, I think the Legislature should have done more to expand opportunities for Florida's middle-class families. Several bills that I believe would have accomplished this goal for numerous people did not pass the House and Senate, and some did not receive a committee hearing.

We did not raise the minimum wage, expand health coverage for working families, or pass bills to guarantee equal pay for equal work. I also think even more could have been done during the 60-day Legislative Session to preserve Florida's environmental treasures, like our beaches, the Everglades, and this state's unique freshwater springs.

I hope you find this update to be a useful tool in evaluating and understanding the work of the Legislature. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff if you have any concerns or questions. I can be reached at (561) 682-0156 or send me an email at Mark.Pafford@myfloridahouse.gov. I am always glad to hear from you.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pafford".

Representative, Florida House District 86



OPPOSING THE STATE BUDGET

I could not in good conscience support the 2014 state budget proposal when the Legislature failed in my view to make the right financial decisions for Florida's middle-class families.

The \$77.1 billion state spending plan relies on higher property tax values to address Florida's new investments in schools, and it socks away billions of dollars that I think should instead be circulated now into our state's economy.

The budget sent to the governor makes what I consider insufficient progress toward reducing waiting lists for state services, fails to restore school spending on a per-pupil basis to pre-recession levels, and does not accept the return of our federal

tax dollars to help pay for health coverage for many hard-working Floridians.

There are many components of the budget that I like, including: investments in our schools, economic incentives to promote job growth and business opportunities, and increases in tourism promotion spending. The budget also continues various initiatives to protect Florida's vital natural resources and funds projects that benefit our local community.

Unfortunately, the overall plan failed to meet my expectations and what I believe are Florida's critical needs.

JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

With a substantial budget surplus available this year, the Legislature worked to offer Floridians more than \$500 million in tax and fee relief. The bulk of the cuts will occur by rolling back vehicle-registration fees, starting September 1.

Individuals renewing their vehicle registration pay a combination of fees based on the size and type of vehicle, so the savings associated with legislation passed this year will be different for each individual based on the type of car they drive. On average, it is expected that Floridians will see their registration costs reduced by \$25.05 for heavyweight vehicles, \$21.55 for middle-weight vehicles, and \$18.55 for lightweight vehicles.

Also this year, shoppers buying clothes and school supplies will get a three-day tax holiday from August 1 through August 3. We also authorized a three-day sales tax holiday in September on the purchase of energy efficient appliances, and a nine-day sales tax holiday on the sale of hurricane preparation supplies, such as batteries and generators.

The Legislature's tax-relief package also includes permanent sales tax exemptions for car seats and booster seats, youth bicycle helmets, and college and university meal plans. There also are tax breaks for



cement mixers, therapeutic pet food and insurance premiums for bail bondsmen and title insurers.

There will also be an increase to the available tax credits for an affordable housing program, as well as new programs to make loans to small businesses to grow their operations. Under these "microfinance" programs passed by the Legislature, help is targeted to borrowers who are entrepreneurs or small businesses with 25 or fewer employees and revenue up to \$1.5 million a year.

Additional legislation that passed seeks to enable professional sports franchises to compete for new sales tax subsidies to help fund stadium construction and renovations.

EDUCATION

A quality education is vital to attaining and keeping a good job and a place in the middle class. That's why I am thankful that spending on public education in Florida will increase this year. Unfortunately, on a per-student basis, the dollars being put into K-12 education still do not catch up to pre-recession levels. I'm also disappointed that Florida's new investments in schools will rely on higher local property tax values.

For our colleges and universities, there are no tuition increases proposed by the Legislature this year, and there will be an additional \$200 million provided for state universities.

Given the importance of a college education, I am pleased that the Legislature approved a measure to give undocumented residents a waiver to pay in-state tuition rates at state universities.

We also approved a bill that will allow certain undocumented immigrants a chance to practice law



in our state. The immigrant who triggered this new policy concerning admissions to the Florida Bar is Jose Godinez-Samperio of Largo. He was brought to the country by his parents at age 9 from Mexico and later graduated with honors from law school at Florida State University.

This year, I was among lawmakers who opposed efforts to expand eligibility in the state's school voucher system. Under a bill that passed, more people can take part in a program in which companies donate money to nonprofit entities that pay for children to go to private schools. I opposed this expansion of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program because, in my view, it may bleed support away from our traditional public schools.

HEALTH CARE FOR FLORIDIANS

Expansion of health coverage to the uninsured under the Affordable Care Act remained a major concern of mine this year. But unlike last year, the House of Representatives didn't debate bills on Medicaid expansion. Instead, the House focused on other health topics, such as the scope of practice of nurses, changes to the health insurance programs for public employees, and various other proposals, including one that attempted to address the cost of care at certain trauma centers.

Despite sometimes contentious deliberations, many of the major health care bills were left unresolved on the last night of session. Among those ideas that didn't pass was an effort to improve oversight of assisted living facilities, or ALFs.

I am pleased that the Legislature sent to the Governor the Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act. The bipartisan legislation will allow people suffering from cancer, Lou Gehrig's disease, and other illnesses to be able to legally use a strain of non-euphoric low-THC marijuana under

the direction of a licensed Florida physician. With more than 125,000 children and 380,000 adults in Florida with severe epilepsy and other debilitating illnesses, I believe it's time to ease the suffering and bring relief.

Meanwhile, I would have liked to have seen more state spending focused on reducing various waitlists for services to seniors, families and children. Though a few health care waitlists were fully funded, such as one for certain "critical needs" individuals, tens of thousands of individuals continue to wait for needed services that our state, in my opinion, really can afford to provide.



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FLOOD INSURANCE

A bill passed by the Legislature tries to provide relief for homeowners who are without flood insurance and are struggling to afford coverage offered under the National Flood Insurance Program. Senate Bill 542 allows insurers to write, and the state to regulate, flood insurance policies.



IMPORTANT HURRICANE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**Palm Beach County Division of
Emergency Management:**

(561) 712-6400

Hearing Impaired (TTY/TTD):

(561) 712-6343

**American Red Cross Greater Palm Beach
Area Chapter:**

(561) 833-7711

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department:

(561) 688-3000 (non-emergency)

School District of Palm Beach County:

(561) 434-8000

Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control:

(561) 233-1200

Disabled Transportation Assistance:

(561) 649-9848

**Special Needs Shelter/Emergency
Medical Services:**

(561) 712-6400

**FL Department of Financial Services
Hurricane Helpline:**

(800) 227-8676

Report power outages to FPL:

1-800-468-8243

Residents with questions before, during
and after a hurricane should call 211.