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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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## 2019 Florida Legislative Session

Week 8 – April 22-26, 2019

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### **One Week to Go – Budget Talks Continue**

In this penultimate week of the 2019 Legislative Session, budget conference negotiations began for the House and Senate to reach an agreement on Florida's approximately \$90 billion budget. Originally, the subcommittees were given until Thursday night to finish their work. But with much still left to do, that deadline was extending through this morning. All unresolved issues were then "bumped" to the appropriations chairs. After a final agreement is reached lawmakers must wait 72 hours before they can vote on the budget, meaning the conference report must be finished by Tuesday for an on-time adjournment. Much progress has been made, including:

**Education Funding** - The Senate shaved \$287 million off its recommended K-12 funding level of \$12.8 billion. The House accepted that offer, which is \$235 million above its original position. This will be a \$580 million (4.9%) increase from current spending.

**Visit Florida** - Unfortunately, the Senate has accepted the House position of only \$19 million for VF--enough to get it to its scheduled sunset date of Oct. 1. FTW urges the Legislature to reconsider this misguided action.

**Enterprise Florida** - The House has agreed to continue to fund EF, accepting the Senate position of \$16 million, matching current year funding.

**Affordable Housing** - The Senate--and Florida TaxWatch--recommended fully funding affordable housing programs at \$322 million by not sweeping the housing trust funds. The House had proposed only \$124 million. In conference, the Senate reduced its offer to \$200 million, which the House accepted, although there is still a difference in how the money will be spent.

**Hospital Funding** - The House was proposing a \$112 million (3%) cut in Medicaid reimbursements while the Senate did not want to cut rates but proposed eliminating the "critical care fund" and using its \$318 million to increase the base rates for all hospitals, which would hurt hospitals with high levels of charity care. The House has now offered to back off its proposed cut and redistribute \$24 million from critical care to the base rates.

## **Tax Package and Other Legislation**

With full day floor sessions every day, a flurry of bills are being debated and passed by the two chambers. Just before midnight last night, the House passed its \$161 million tax package. It includes a .35% rate reduction in the business rent tax and two sales tax holidays. Another provision, requiring school districts to share voter-approved operational levies with charter schools (retroactive application), generated significant debate.

The Senate approved bills to: expand school choice; address school safety; make changes in higher education; and advance the construction of three major new toll roads through rural Florida (priority of the Senate President.)

For more information on these and other bills, see our Legislative Update webpage and check back often during the last week of session to keep up on all the latest developments. The site is being frequently updated.

[Read The Full Legislative Update](#)