
CAPITOL CONNECTION

News and Views from
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Florida, District 75
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TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

This week, the Florida House of Representatives convened a special session in order to tackle issues that were not addressed at the end of regular session this past May. The following is a synopsis of some of the accomplishments that we were able to achieve during this week's special session:

- ✓ **Medicaid Reform (HB 3B)** – Recognizing that the old Medicaid system failed to serve the needs of recipients and would soon become an unsustainable burden on the state budget, the Legislature enacted two pilot programs in Broward and Duval counties that emphasize greater choice, accountability, and prevention of fraud and abuse
- ✓ **Slots Implementation and Regulation (HB 1B)** – As directed by a voter-approved constitutional amendment, the Legislature has developed regulations for slot machines in four Broward County pari-mutuel facilities. No facility may have more than 1,500 machines, and each machine must have a minimum payout of 85%. A tax of 50% will be levied against all slot machine revenues, the proceeds of which will directly benefit the state education system.
- ✓ **Lobbying Reform (SB 6)** – The reform bill bans all gifts from lobbyists to legislators, executive officials, and employees and requires more transparency from lobbyists.
- ✓ **In-Kind Donation Clarification (SB 8)** – Senate Bill 8B outlines the manner by which an in-kind contribution to a state or county political party is accepted. Only a party's chairperson or chairperson's designee may accept an in-kind contribution to a state or county political party.
- ✓ **State Minimum Wage Implementation (SB 18)** – Under SB 18, to which the House gave final approval, each adjusted state minimum wage rate will take effect on the following January 1, with the initial adjusted minimum wage rate to take effect on January 1, 2006. This bill sets the Florida minimum wage higher than that required by the federal government and will benefit employees, employers, and the Florida economy at large.
- ✓ **Hurricane Property Tax Relief (HB 15)** - This bill gives counties who have suffered major disasters the option to provide property tax discount extensions to local residents.
- ✓ **Increased Judges (41B)** – This bill adds two additional circuit judges and two Collier county judges and staff to the growing 20th Judicial Circuit.

TRUDI'S THOUGHTS....

The holiday season is upon us and I would like to take a moment to thank God for all of the wonderful blessings that he has given me over the past year, including the opportunity to serve the people of Southwest Florida in Tallahassee. What an incredible whirlwind year it has been! I have had the chance to hear from many of you as you have shared your thoughts, concerns and ideas with me. I am thankful that I have had the help and support of so many people who care about the issues and the State of Florida. It is my hope that I may continue to serve you well in Tallahassee. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” - Isaiah 9:6