

# FSBA

# BOARDER-LINE

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Florida School Boards Association

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As the start of the 2007 Legislative Session approaches, this issue of Boarder-Line is intended to bring you up to date on a variety of legislative issues and to provide you with some important advocacy tools.

### **Governor's Budget Recommendations**

Governor Crist has released his budget recommendations for fiscal year 2007-2008. The Governor's budget provides an increase in the FEFP of more than \$1.36 billion for a total of \$19.4 billion. This represents an increase in total funding of 7.54%. The Governor anticipates growth of only 5,440 FTE and his budget provides \$7,341.42 in total funds per student – in increase of 7.32%. Governor Crist has recommended that the Required Local Effort millage rate be reduced from 5.01 mills to 4.91 mills. The Governor proposes to double the allocation for teacher performance pay to total \$295,000,000 in order to award the top 25% of instructional personnel with a 10% bonus. The Governor's budget also includes a fuel and utilities supplement of \$25,600,000, an increase in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program to provide \$2,622 in per student funding, funding to provide an additional 400 reading coaches, and a shift of funding for the K-8 Virtual School into the FEFP. These and other key allocations are highlighted in the attached table comparing the Governor's 2007-2008 budget recommendation with 2006-2007 appropriations.

### **Interim Committee Meetings**

The legislature has nearly completed a series of Interim Committee Meetings that began in January. These interim meetings lay the groundwork for many of the issues that will take center stage during the Session. It is evident that both the House and Senate are keenly interested in performance pay, but recognize that some adjustments must be made to the current STAR program. The House Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competitiveness and the Senate Pre-K-12 Education Committee have heard extensive testimony on the difficulties in implementing STAR and have invited FSBA and other stakeholder groups to submit proposals on how performance pay may be better implemented. FSBA's proposal for revamping the STAR Program is attached.

Other issues that have been highlighted are the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program, class size reduction implementation, standards and curriculum redesign, gifted education, teacher recruitment and retention, high school graduation and drop out rates, school choice options, text book adoption, acceleration programs such as dual enrollment and advanced placement, and property tax relief.

**Bill Action During Interim Committee Meetings**

**SB 114 School Safety/Bullying and Harassment by Baker**

This bill is similar to bills filed in the last session. Formally called the “Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act,” the bill prohibits acts of bullying and harassment of any public K-12 student or employee during education programs or activities, on school buses, or through use of data or computer software accessed through computer systems at schools. The bill requires schools to document what they have done to intervene in cases of bullying and to notify parents if a bullying incident occurs involving their child. The bill requires school districts to adopt a bullying and harassment policy that may not incorporate the federal anti-discrimination categories. However, a school district may establish and/or maintain separate anti-discrimination policies that include categories of students. The bill requires DOE approval of the district’s policy and district compliance with reporting procedures as prerequisites for receipt of safe schools funds.

**STATUS:** Favorable Senate Pre-K - 12 Education Committee

**SB 148 School Start Date by Posey**

This bill is in response to a measure passed during the 2006 session that required schools to open no earlier than 14 days before Labor Day. As amended, the bill would authorize an earlier opening date if school boards hold at least three public hearings geographically located throughout the school district, survey the parents of all enrolled students, and approve an earlier opening date by two-thirds vote of the membership of the school board. The bill also provides that a school that operates on a year-round or extended calendar may open and close pursuant to district school board policy and may open earlier than 14 days before Labor Day.

**STATUS:** Unfavorable in Senate Pre-K - 12 Committee, Laid on the Table

**SB 414 FRS / DROP Extension by Wise**

This bill authorizes district school superintendents to approve designated administrative personnel participation in DROP for an extension of up to 36 months beyond the 60 month maximum currently available. For district-based administrators, approval must be tied to critical administrative shortages as designated by the school board.

**STATUS:** Favorable in Senate Pre-K - 12 Committee

**SB 302 Student Voter Education by Fasano**

The bill requires district school boards and county supervisors of elections to cooperate in conducting voter education for high school students in grade 12. The bill requires that a voter education presentation must be conducted by the supervisor of elections each semester during school hours and specifies the content and requirements of the presentation. However, the program is voluntary for public and nonpublic high schools.

**STATUS:** Favorable in Senate Pre-K - 12 Committee

**SB 450 Teachers Lead Program Stipend/Pre-K by Rich**

This bill would make certified, full-time teachers of prekindergarten students who are funded through the FEFP eligible for the Florida Teachers Lead Program stipend. Full-time media specialists and guidance counselors who serve those students also would be eligible for the stipend. The Commissioner must include each district’s prekindergarten enrollment in the calculation of the amount for each school district.

**STATUS:** Favorable in Senate Pre-K - 12 Committee

## **Advocacy Tools and Events**

- Attached is a list of selected legislative committees that we will be following closely throughout the session. Please establish or strengthen your relationship with the legislators that serve on any of these committees so that you will be able to communicate with these legislators quickly and easily throughout the 2007 Session.
- Attached is a copy of "Education Fast Facts" which contains bulleted information about Florida's public schools. If you have not done so already, you may also wish to use this as a template to create a similar set of Fast Facts that are specific to your school district. These fact sheets can be a handy reference tool when speaking with legislators, the press, and your constituents.
- Attached is a table depicting each school district, each district's FSBA Legislative Committee members, each district's representatives in the Florida House, Florida Senate, and U.S. Congress. We hope this will assist you in forming alliances with other school districts in lobbying your shared elected officials in Tallahassee and Washington.
- Attached is the 2007 FSBA Platform and Positions on Issues of Continuing Concern. We urge you to contact the legislators that represent your school district to discuss the Platform, Positions, and other issues of interest and concern to you.
- FSBA Day In the Legislature Conference is scheduled for March 28 - 29, 2007. The conference agenda will include a briefing on active legislative issues and a comprehensive analysis of available education budget information. Please mark your calendar and plan on attending this important and informative conference.

### **Important Legislative Dates**

March 6, 2007	2007 Legislative Session Convenes
March 28 - 29, 2007	FSBA Day In the Legislature Conference
May 4, 2007	2007 Legislative Session Adjourns

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### **FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

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