



# Delegation Digest

## MARCH 15-19 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to Week 3 of the 2021 Legislative Session. In this Week's edition of the Delegation Digest, we are highlighting legislation related to COVID-19, as well as bills that are on the move by Delegation members.

With 5 more weeks of Session left, bills are moving quickly through their committees, appropriation requests are being heard in the House and budget talks should be starting soon.

The week ended with both chambers in session passing various bills. To learn more about the bills passed and to watch session or any committee meeting, visit [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov) or [flsenate.gov](http://flsenate.gov).



# LEGISLATION ON THE MOVE

Please note this is just a snapshot of the bills filed by the Delegation members. You can visit [Myfloridahouse.gov](http://Myfloridahouse.gov) or [FlSenate.gov](http://Flsenate.gov) to view a complete list of bills.

## **Senator Harrell - District 25**

**SB 354 - Restitution** - This bill amends ss. 775.089 and 985.437, F.S., providing that while the primary purpose of restitution is to compensate the victim, it also serves the rehabilitative and deterrent goals of the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Additionally, the bill provides that restitution must be determined on a fair market value basis unless the state, victim, or defendant or child, shows that using another basis, including, but not limited to, replacement cost, purchase price less depreciation, or actual cost of repair, is equitable and better furthers the purposes of restitution. The court may consider hearsay evidence for the purpose of determining restitution. Currently this bill is in the Senate Rules Committee.

## **Senator Polsky - District 29**

**CS/SB 1256: Homestead Exemption for Seniors 65 and Older** - This bill alters the process by which a senior verifies his or her income for purposes of receiving certain income-based homestead property tax exemptions. Current law authorizes local governments to enact ordinances granting additional homestead exemptions for low-income seniors over the age of 65. The bill removes the requirement that a qualifying senior annually submit a sworn statement of his or her income to the property appraiser, and instead establishes a process by which the senior must notify a property appraiser upon a change in income that may disqualify him or her for the exemption. Specifically, the bill requires that an ordinance enacted by a local government authorizing an additional homestead exemption for low-income seniors must require the taxpayer to submit a sworn statement of household income when claiming the exemption for the first time only, rather than annually. The property appraiser must annually notify each taxpayer claiming the exemption of the adjusted income limitation for that year. The taxpayer must then notify the property appraiser if his or her income exceeds such income limitation. The bill passed favorably in the Senate Community Affairs Committee meeting.

## **Senator Berman - District 31**

**SB 224: Sales Tax Exemption** - This bill exempts the purchase of certain items that assist individuals in living and aging independently in their homes from the sales and use tax. Specifically, the bill exempts the following items from the collection of the sales and use tax:

- Bed transfer handles selling for \$60 or less;
- Bed rails selling for \$110 or less;
- Grab bars selling for \$100 or less; and
- Shower seats selling for \$100 or less.

The bill was voted favorable by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs.

## **Senator Powell - District 30**

**CS/SB 1192: Mental Illness Training for Law Enforcement Officers** - This bill requires the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to establish a continued employment training component relating to mental illness. The bill provides a nonexclusive list of subject matter to be included in the training component and specifies that completion of the training component may count toward the 40 hours of required instruction for continued employment or appointment as a law enforcement officer. The bill passed favorable by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice.

## **Representative Matt Willhite - District 86**

**Dementia-related Staff Training -** The bill creates or revises training requirements for all employees of nursing homes, home health agencies, hospices, ALFs, adult family-care homes, and adult daycare centers, not just those who have direct contact with individuals with ADRD. The bill requires the training to be completed within 30 days of beginning employment, instead of within three months. The bill was temporarily postponed in one of its committee stops.

## **Representative John Snyder - District 82**

**CS/HB 921 - Electronic Threats -** This bill modernizes the crime of written threats to reflect the manner in which many people currently communicate. The bill amends s. 836.10, F.S., to prohibit a person from sending, posting, or transmitting, or procuring the sending, posting, or transmission of, a writing or other record, including an electronic record, in any manner by which it may be viewed by another person, when in such writing or record the person makes a threat to:

- Kill or do bodily harm to another person; or
- Conduct a mass shooting or an act of terrorism.

The bill is on Second Reading to be heard on the House Floor.

## **Representative Mike Caruso - District 89**

**HB 365 - Motor Vehicle Rentals** - this bill establishes statutory requirements for peer-to-peer car-sharing, including surcharge and tax payments, and liabilities and insurance obligations among participants. This bill passed favorably out of the House Tourism, Infrastructure & Energy Subcommittee.

## **Representative Joe Casello - District 90**

**HB 79 - Purple Alert** - This bill requires Division of Emergency Management to identify & maintain an inventory of certain digitally displayed automatic changeable facing signs; requires FDLE, in cooperation with other agencies, to establish & implement Purple Alert concerning certain missing adults. This bill has passed favorably out of the House Appropriations Committee.

## **Representative Rick Roth - District 85**

**HB 1035 - Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District, Palm Beach County** - The Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District (District) is an independent special district created in 1971 by special act. The charter of the District was most recently codified in 2002. The District operates a sewer and wastewater system serving the Towns of Jupiter and Juno Beach, the Village of Tequesta, and unincorporated portions of southern Martin County and northern Palm Beach County. The bill provides for the codification of existing special acts concerning the District, makes conforming changes, and repeals the existing special acts governing the District. The bill passed favorable out of the House Local Administration & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee and is now on agenda on the House Ways and Means Committee.

# **COVID-19 LEGISLATION**

It has been one year since Palm Beach County and the State declared an emergency for COVID-19. As the pandemic continues, legislation has been filed in both the House and Senate to deal with lessons learned from COVID-19. There have been over 100 bills filed relating to COVID-19; here is a snapshot of what has been filed. If you would like to learn more, please visit [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov) or [flsenate.gov](http://flsenate.gov).

**SB 72 - Civil Liability for Damage Relating to COVID-19** - Senator Brandes - Specifying requirements for civil actions based on COVID-19-related claims; requiring the court to make certain determinations in such actions; providing that plaintiffs have the burden of proof in such actions; providing preliminary procedures for civil actions based on COVID-19-related claims; requiring COVID-19-related claims to commence within specified timeframes, etc. CS/SB 72 is a combination of SB 72 and SB 74, with some additional changes. SB 72 creates civil liability protections for individuals, businesses, governmental entities, and other organizations against COVID-19-related claims. SB 74 provides lesser liability protections to health care providers, who are defined in the bill, and provides procedures for civil actions against them. The bill passed on the Senate Floor and is now on the House agenda.

**SB 1414 - COVID-19 Relief Cash Flow Loan Program** - Senator Jones - This bill would create the COVID-19 Relief Cash Flow Loan Program for the purpose of assisting small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in making timely payments to continue operating; providing eligibility requirements for receiving a cash flow loan; requiring the Department of Economic Opportunity to provide certain information and instructions, administer the loans, distribute loan funds, and deposit repaid funds into the Budget Stabilization Fund, subject to certain requirements, etc.

**Community-Based Post-COVID Acceleration Initiative** - Representative Hardy - Provides an appropriation for the Community-Based Post-COVID Acceleration Initiative - Appropriations Request.

**SB 866 - COVID-19 Impact on School Accountability - Senator Thurston** - amends accountability provisions in recognition of the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. The bill provides that school grades, school improvement ratings, and student performance results from the statewide, standardized assessments for the 2020-2021 school year may not be used for specified purposes, including:

- School turnaround options;
- Charter school system and school district high-performing designations;
- Grade 3 retention;
- High school graduation; and
- Personnel evaluations.

# IN AND AROUND THE CAPITOL



**HB 79 - The Purple Alert** passed the Appropriations Committee 27-0. This bill has the potential to save lives, by creating an alert system to help find missing adults with disabilities similar to Autism and Down syndrome. Thank you to State Representative Matt Willhite for co-sponsoring and State Senator Lori Berman for her companion bill in the Senate. - Representative Joe Casello

During the March 16 Senate Education Committee, **SB - 86 - Student Financial Aid** was heard and voted on. Senator Berman and Senator Polsky both were vocal in voting no against this bill. To view their remarks during the committee meeting

[CLICK HERE](#) 



Representative Silvers recently met virtually with students from the NSU College of Pharmacy as part of the Florida Pharmacy Association's Legislative Days. They discussed various health care bills as well as healthcare needs in the community. They also spoke about a pharmacist's role in the COVID-19 pandemic and bills that affect drug pricing for patients.



In this video, Senator Powell provides viewers with updates on vaccination sites in Palm Beach County and discusses some of the many controversial bills such as the 'vote-by-mail' legislation Senate Bill 90, which proposes that all vote-by-mail drop boxes be removed throughout the state. SPECIAL SURPRISE: In addition to the updates, at the end of this video Senator Powell highlights The Florida Civil Rights Hall of Fame, which is located in the main lobby of the Florida State Capitol

## IN AND AROUND THE CAPITOL

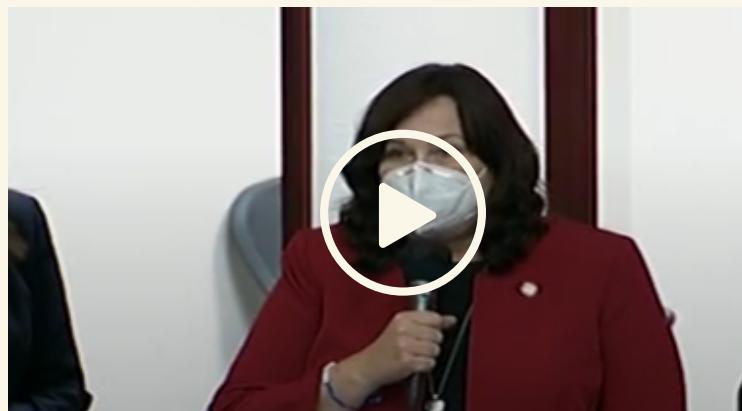
On March 18, 2021, House members heard and voted on [HB 217- Conservation Area Designations](#) sponsored by Representative Hunschosky. In a moving speech and presentation, Representative Hunchosky paid tribute to Kristen Jacobs, a former colleague, and House member. Representative Jacobs sadly passed away in 2020 from a long battle with cancer. During her time in the Florida House, she passionately advocated for environmental protection, and clean water in Florida. In 2018, the Legislature passed House Bill 53 sponsored by Rep. Jacobs to establish the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area. This area consists of sovereign submerged lands and waters offshore of Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties stretching from the St. Lucie Inlet to the northern boundary of Biscayne National Park. [HB 217](#) would designate the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area as the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area. The bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection to erect markers to designate the area.



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Carrying this bill in the House is her District 96 successor, Representative Christine Hunschofsky (D-Parkland). “It is my privilege to carry this bill in the Florida House to honor my friend Kristin,” stated Representative Hunschofsky. “Her name will forever be seen off the coast of Martin, Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties from the St. Lucie Inlet to Biscayne National Park. This will be a beautiful memorial to a very special Broward County champion. As the bill has gone through the committee process, expressions from both sides of the aisle have been truly heartwarming. The bill is a fitting tribute to honor her legacy as an advocate for Florida’s environmental assets.”

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To view Representative Hunschofsky present HB 217 on the House floor, go to the 2:14:12 mark.

# Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation

Delegation Chair - Rep. David Silvers  
Delegation Vice-Chair - Rep. Mike Caruso

## **Senators**

Gayle Harrell - District 25  
Tina Polsky - District 29  
Bobby Powell, Jr. - District 30  
Lori Berman - District 31

## **Representatives**

Kelly Skidmore - District 81  
John Snyder - District 82  
Rick Roth - District 85  
Matt Willhite - District 86  
David Silvers - District 87  
Omari Hardy - District 88  
Mike Caruso - District 89  
Joseph "Joe" Casello - District 90  
Emily Slosberg - District 91

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The Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation Office is a non-partisan office that serves all thirteen members of the Florida Senate and House of Representatives representing Palm Beach County in Tallahassee. The delegation office is responsible for: scheduling and coordinating all delegation meetings in Palm Beach County and Tallahassee; developing the delegation's legislative program including local bills, appropriation requests, and county and municipal legislative priorities; providing legislative assistance and research to the delegation during the legislative session; and serving as a liaison between the delegation and local governments and community organization.