

## 2015 Legislative Summary

The issues of Medicaid expansion, water conservation and land acquisition dominated the 2015 Regular Session and Special Session making it one of the most contentious Sessions in many years. The difficulty of the issues and the lack of cooperation from the federal government made it almost impossible to prepare a budget. During the last week of Session the two Chambers were \$4 billion apart on the health care budget, making it difficult to bridge the gap. Negotiations came to a halt and the House adjourned early leaving the Senate in Session. Since most bills have some kind of fiscal impact, legislators struggled to get their bills passed and the early adjournment of the House created much more chaos than normal during the closing days.

Here are the issues of importance to private schools from the Sessions.

### Regular Session

#### **HB 7069 Education Accountability became law on 4-14-15.**

- It changes the district school start date to no earlier than Aug. 10.
- It removes the requirement for public schools to administer the PERT prior to the beginning of grade 12. (Will this affect private school students since state colleges can use a concordant score on the SAT and ACT in place of the PERT for dual enrollment and admission? That remains to be seen.)
- It limits school districts to 5% of school hours in a school year for administration of assessments.
- It also requires school districts to administer the statewide, standardized and approved EOC assessment in Algebra I and II, Geometry, Biology I, US History and Civics as the final cumulative exam. (It is not clear how this will affect the Transfer of Credit Rule for a private school student transferring into a public school.)
- It suspends the issuance of school grades and teacher evaluations for the 2014-2015 school year until an independent entity confirms the validity of first-time state assessments.

#### **SB 874 - Dual Enrollment died on the Calendar.**

- Even though Sen. Stargel was tireless in her effort to clarify that private school students could not be charged for dual enrollment, no change occurred this Session.
- Private schools and parents will have to put a full court press on their Representatives and Senators to change the current practice of state colleges charging private schools tuition when private school students take dual enrollment courses.

#### **SB 1480 – FHSAA bills died in Committee**

- FCIS and some of the individual schools worked very hard to ensure that this bill and the House Bill 7137 did not have negative affect on the current representation that private schools have in the FHSAA governance. Some of the provisions in the bill would have radically changed the landscape of high school athletics, opening the door to creating a very unfair playing field.

#### **SB 7006 – Early Learning died in Committee**

- This was the same bill from 2014 which had been agreed upon by both chambers. It addressed health, safety and sanitation. The bill would have required religious exempt programs to be

inspected by DCF or the ELCs to ensure that they met all the safety standards, but exempted religious exempt programs from licensure.

**HB 19 – School Safety died on the Calendar**

- This bill would have authorized public and private schools to designate a former or current military or law enforcement officer to carry a concealed weapon or firearm on school property under certain conditions. It would have also required district school boards & private schools to allow campus tours by local law enforcement agencies for specified purposes & to document their recommendations.

**Special Session and the Budget**

**SB 2502- A Bright Future Scholarship Approved Volunteer Hours were expanded in the Budget Implementing Bill**

- For the 2015-16 year volunteer service work may include, but is not limited to, a business or government internship, work for a nonprofit community service organization, or activity on behalf of a candidate for public office. This provision will expire July 1, 2016.

**SB 2502-A Personal Learning Scholarship Program (PLSA) was expanded in the Budget Implementing Bill.**

- The bill expands the list of eligible disabilities to include autism spectrum disorder and muscular dystrophy.
- The bill extends the ages to include 3 and 4 year olds.
- The bill allows the funds to be used for tuition and fees for part-time tutoring services provided by a person who holds a valid Florida educator’s certificate pursuant to s. 1012.56, a person who holds an adjunct teaching certificate pursuant to s. 1012.57, or a person who has demonstrated a mastery of subject area knowledge pursuant to s. 1012.56(5).

**Bright Futures Scholarships**

BF award per credit hour or credit hour equivalent for the 2015-2016 academic year shall be as follows:

**Academic Scholars**

4-Year Institutions.....\$103  
2-Year Institutions.....\$ 63  
Upper-Division Programs at Florida Colleges....\$ 71  
Career/Technical Centers.....\$ 52

**Medallion Scholars**

4-Year Institutions.....\$ 77  
2-Year Institutions.....\$ 63  
Upper-Division Programs at Florida Colleges....\$ 53  
Career/Technical Centers.....\$ 39

**Gold Seal Vocational Scholars**

Career Certificate Program.....\$ 39  
Applied Technology Diploma Program.....\$ 39  
Technical Degree Education Program.....\$ 48

The additional stipend for Top Scholars shall be \$44 per credit hour.

**Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG)**

FRAG is \$3000 tuition assistance for the 2015-16 academic year.

**VPK Funding**

- Funding for the 2015-2016 fiscal year for each student participating in the school year program is \$2,437 and in the summer program is \$2,080.
- Funds were allocated to purchase and implement the Voluntary Prekindergarten research-based pre- and post-assessment. The instrument must assess all domains as identified in the 2011 "Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds", to the maximum extent possible, and provide valid and reliable data to measure student learning gains. In addition, funds provided to the Office of Early Learning shall be used to implement Voluntary Prekindergarten accountability standards, as required by section 1002.67, Florida Statutes.