

They're Baa-ck!

Thanks to House Speaker Johnny Byrd's well-publicized comment comparing House members to sheep, we have seen everything from well-groomed wool bearers of the four-legged variety flocking around the Capitol to "sheep-ties" worn by legislators, not to mention the plethora of really baa-d jokes.

Yet the serious business of the State began with legislators diving into the most controversial issues within hours of the opening ceremony. Headline grabbers such as parental notification ended up on the floor of the House in heated debate.

House Appropriations cuts 3.5% to "Reprioritize" Budget - House Appropriations Chairman Bruce Kyle (R-Ft. Myers) has directed the subcommittee chairs to cut 3.5% from every program area in order to "reprioritize and free-up" General Revenue. ***In Education, that's almost \$400 million.*** You might think that the exercise might be to add money to operational funding for public schools, community colleges and universities. But when you analyze their proposal, the FEFP is reduced \$174 million, the community college program fund is reduced \$28 million and the Universities E&G funding is reduced \$62 million. These budget categories are the primary sources for these delivery systems. If they are being reduced, where is the money going to be redirected? If it is going back to these areas, why reduce it in the first place?

We will keep you posted as this is currently an "exercise" but FEA and UFF believe that there needs to be discussions to add needed funding not "exercises" to redistribute the inadequate levels that we have now.

UFF Member Lobbyist's Impressions by Jim Lansing, UFF-Broward CC Government Relations

The UFF/FEA Lobbying project provides an opportunity for members to be personally in touch with the legislative process by attending House and Senate committee meetings, interacting with legislators, and observing the legislative sessions.

A typical day begins with a briefing by Marshall Ogletree about the upcoming issues of the session and the specific events of that day. Then UFF and FEA members go on to get in touch with their local legislative delegation members to be sure they are informed about the union's positions on the issues.

In two and a half days I saw the Legislative session begin ceremoniously, and then move right into the serious business. As a person from Broward County, I found that most of my delegation is sympathetic to our issues. This is different from other areas.

Unfortunately, I witnessed legislation moving along regarding privatization of services, expanding vouchers, and micro-managing local activities. This is the time for members to be involved in the process not only in Tallahassee, but also at the local delegation level.

Marshall Ogletree and the government relations staff are doing a great job in trying times. The member-lobbying project supports them because local legislative delegations really respond to input from individuals from their district. I feel it was well worth the time spent here in Tallahassee.

