



*Florida Police Benevolent Association, Inc.*  
**CAPITOL REPORT**

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For the Week Ending March 5, 2010



**Matt Puckett**  
*Deputy Executive  
Director*

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## **Opening Week of the 2010 Legislative Session**

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Okay, lobbying the Legislature in 2010 is going to be an incredible task.

I found myself thinking of the iPhone commercial where Apple is demonstrating that the phone has an application for almost anything you could imagine. Well, this session is similar in that if you could think of an idea, particularly an idea that reduces government, there's a bill for that.

Reducing government is the theme this year... well, it has been the theme for many years, but it appears in 2010 reducing government is a mandatory function in order to file a bill. Fortunately, not all bills are created equal and it is our task to determine the bills with a pulse from the ones dead on arrival.

The obvious way to accomplish this task is to just ask the leadership of the House and Senate what they plan to achieve. At the end of the day, they make the final decision to either let a proposed bill become law, or to stop it in its tracks. This task gets easier as the session wears on, but in the beginning, when themes rule the day, it is important to piece together where the two bodies seem to have agreements.

It is very apparent that both the House and Senate leadership are going to make changes in how the state and, active and retired, state employees pay for group health insurance. The two ideas that have the most traction, along with identical legislation in the House and Senate, are requiring Select Exempt Employees to pay a premium towards health insurance and requiring retirees to pay market rates for health insurance.

- HB 1231 and SB 2498 will require the Select Exempt Employees to start making the premium payments.
- HB 1025 and SB 1710 will require retirees to pay premium costs at market value.

House and Senate agreements on pension reform are not quite as universal. So far there are a number of studies, reports, and even a few bills that enact some level of reform. I think it is safe to say that both chambers agree that some type of reform is necessary, but what proposals will take shape is still up in the air. Among the proposals being discussed:

#### State Retirement

- Reducing the Special Risk Class in FRS back to the original membership of Law Enforcement Officers, Correctional Officers, and Firefighters. Removing Correctional Probation Officers.
- Reducing the 3% Accrual Rates for Special Risk.
- Increasing the high 5 years to the highest 8 years.
- Capping your retirement payment at 70% not the current 100%.
- Increasing Special Risk normal retirement age to age 60 or 30 years of service.
- Implementing an employee contribution for retirement of 1% of salary.

#### Municipal Retirement

- Capping your retirement payment at 70% not the current 100%.
- Changes the 185 premium tax law so extra money does not have to be spent on extra benefits.
- Increasing normal retirement age to age 60 or 30 years of service.
- Majority of members on the Board of Trustees could not be active or retired pension plan members.

Our final concern is the level of reduction each state agency and department will receive from the state budget allocations. These issues will not be agreed on until the last weeks of session. The house released a [memorandum](#) from Speaker Cretul on March 4<sup>th</sup> which provided each Legislator with the Speaker's priorities and a list of the overall allocations for each major segment of the budget. The allocation for Criminal Justice is fairly consistent with past practice. This should provide some relief to many of our members who were concerned with agency eliminations. We are not out of the woods yet, but this is a helpful start.

The PBA thanks all the members from around the state who took time to join us this week at the Capitol. Members from the Broward County PBA, Central Florida PBA Chapter, Dade County PBA, FHP Chapter, State Correctional Officers Chapter, State Law Enforcement Officers Chapter, and the Suncoast PBA were in Tallahassee to help with the efforts of the first week.

# Study Shows Eight Year DROP Saves the Florida Retirement System Money

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Yes, you read that right. The actuarial study results are in and the eight year DROP (HB 249 and SB 612) proposal will save the state's pension system money.

Specifically, the bill as proposed would provide the system with a net savings to the unfunded actuarial liability of \$148,000 for Special Risk and \$7.4 million for DROP. It will also provide the state \$1.4 million employer contribution savings in fiscal year 2010-2011.

Perhaps this savings will be enough to move the bill through the process, but there is still a long way to go before we start to celebrate the final passage.



**Jim Spearing**  
*Political Consultant*

## Attention All PBA Members

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*You have an excellent lobby team...  
This year, you're gonna need it.*

### 25 Years of Pension, Health Benefits at Risk

I'm not a lobbyist. I'm your political consultant. I guess it makes sense to have me "lobby" the folks we help elect each cycle and, over the years, I have had some success.

It's important for every PBA member to appreciate the veteran team of true lobbyists who step into the breach each session on your behalf.

We start with the most respected, knowledgeable and veteran capitol insider ever to represent law enforcement, Executive Director David Murrell, a superb legislative tactician responsible for nearly every major victory for the profession for the past 25 years.

He is backed up by his ever talented and highly capable Deputy Executive Director Matt Puckett who represents the future brains and energy of the PBA.

Your professional team is rounded out by Ed Hoffman, the most senior lobbyist in Florida history (he certainly crafted many parts of Florida's pension legislation and this is his 51<sup>st</sup> legislative session). He is complemented by Don Teems, an expert in Workers Compensation and Pensions; Gary Bradford, a 20 year veteran of the Tampa Police Department and an influential, highly connected lobbyist; Ken Kopczynski, a nationally recognized expert on prison privatization; and Ed Collins, a savvy veteran with a local government background.

Consider carefully what this group of professionals accomplished BEFORE legislative session even began.

**(Note: Each of the 14 Senators and 42 Representatives listed below serve on committees that will likely hear issues related to law enforcement and were personally briefed by our issues, especially potential threats to your pension, health and other benefits BEFORE session even started.)**

## **Senators**

Senator Charlie Dean (Criminal Justice, Government Oversight & Accountability, General Government Appropriations)

Senator Paula Dockery (Chair, Criminal Justice)

Senator Victor Crist (Chair, Civil & Criminal Justice Appropriations; Criminal Justice; Government Oversight & Accountability)

Senator John Thrasher (Criminal Justice)

Senator Frederica Wilson (Criminal Justice, Civil & Criminal Justice Appropriations)

Senator Jeremy Ring (Chair, Government Oversight & Accountability; Community Affairs)

Senator Eleanor Sobel (Government Oversight & Accountability)

Senator Steve Wise (Community Affairs)

Senator Tony Hill (Community Affairs)

Senator Alex Villalobos (Chair, Rules; Criminal Justice; Civil & Criminal Justice Appropriations)

Senator Dennis Jones (Government Oversight & Accountability)

Senator Mike Bennett (Chair, Community Affairs)

Senator Andy Gardiner (Community Affairs)

Senator Al Lawson (Government Oversight & Accountability; Vice Chair, General Government Appropriations)

## **Representatives**

Rob Schenck (Chair, Government Affairs Policy Committee; Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)

Ken Roberson (Government Affairs Policy Committee)

Kevin Ambler (Chair, Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee; Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council; Government Affairs Policy Committee; Government Operations Appropriations Committee).

Deborah Mayfield (General Government Policy Council, Government Affairs Policy Committee)

Chris Dorworth (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)

Janet Adkins (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee, Government Operations Appropriations Committee).

James Waldman (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council).

Julio Robaina (Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)

Luis Garcia (Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)  
Charles McBurney (Government Affairs Policy Committee, Government Operations Appropriations Committee).  
Oscar Braynon (Government Affairs Policy Committee, Government Operations Appropriations Committee).  
Rick Kriseman (Government Affairs Policy Committee)  
Daryl Rouson (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee).  
Bill Heller (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee).  
Kelly Skidmore (Government Affairs Policy Committee)  
Kelli Stargel (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee)  
Jim Frishe (Government Affairs Policy Committee)  
Doug Holder (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council, Government Affairs Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee).  
Greg Evers (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee)  
Rehwinkel-Vasilinda (Local delegation, Big Bend interest)  
Tom Anderson (Government Affairs Policy Committee)  
Evan Jenne (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Brad Drake (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee)  
Lake Ray (Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Approp. Committee)  
Esteban Bovo (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Ron Shultz (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Ronald "Doc" Renuart (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Van Zant (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Keith Fitzgerald (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Janet Long (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Mark Pafford (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Scott Randolph (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee)  
Eric Eisnaugle (Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)  
Juan Carlos Planas (Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)  
John Tobia (Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)  
Ari Porth (Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)  
Darren Soto (Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)  
Perry Thurston (Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council, Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)  
Eduardo Gonzales (Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)  
Mike Weinstein (Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)  
Audrey Gibson (Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council)  
Juan Zapata (Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee, Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Committee)

***Note: Each scheduled appointment was followed up with a thank you note to the member praising their staff. Post meeting thank you***

***notes are also sent summarizing the meeting result (letters too voluminous to include in this report but available upon request).***

## **What You Can Do**

You and your family and friends can seriously help this effort by paying attention to PBA legislative updates and alerts. We have a Legislative Hotline that allows you to contact your local Senator or Representative in an automated, no cost, way that is highly effective. Stand ready for the call to action, as you always do. Rest easy in knowing the best legislative team in history is standing up for you in Tallahassee.

I'm not a lobbyist, just your political warrior... but very proud of the team and our leadership as we head into battle. You should be too.

## **Bills of Interest from Week One**

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**SB 300** by Senator Mike Bennett and HB 89 by Representative Nick Thompson—*Officer Andrew Widman Act/Pretrial Proceedings.*

The legislation provides that at the first appearance of a probationer or an offender on community control arrested for a new offense for which the court finds the existence of probable cause, the court may determine the likelihood of a prison sanction for the violation based on the new arrest. Provides that the court may order detention if it appears more likely than not that a prison sanction may be forthcoming on the violation, etc. EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/01/2010.

**Florida PBA** is supporting this legislation along with **Florida Police Chiefs' Association**. This legislation is in the memory of Officer Andrew Widman, a police officer, a father, a husband, and a dear colleague of the men and women at the Fort Myers Police Department. Officer Widman was killed in the line of duty in 2008.

SB 300 was heard in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup> and received unanimous support. PBA and the Chiefs provided public support during the committee meeting.