



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

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**For the Week Ending March 12, 2010**



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*Deputy Executive  
Director*

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## **... About Your Health Insurance**

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Now last week, the Florida PBA sent out a Red Alert to inform all of you about potential changes to your retirement benefits (see article *And There's More on the Pensions too*). We have received a solid response from the membership and judging by the comments from some of the Legislators on the list, you are making the phone calls. Please keep those phone calls and emails going (see the last page for details).

Sadly, changes to your pensions are not the only major reform issues related to your benefits being discussed. Health Insurance is probably at the top of the list. Last week, we wrote in the Capitol Report about the [four bills](#) concerning major changes to your health insurance, but we did not make a key connection for you – the changes in HB 1025 and SB 1710 for retiree premiums are designed to apply to retirees from every level of government not just state retirees. If you are retired from a city, or a county, these changes could impact your premiums, too.

**This legislation will increase the premium costs for retirees and those close to retirement at every level of government.**

# And There's More on the Pensions too

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Most of the membership's concern has been focused on pension reform and, rightfully so, since we targeted pension legislation in our Red Alert last Friday. Our concerns run the gamut of reform from purging Special Risk, lowering accrual rates, raising contribution rates for employees, and increasing the age requirements for retirement.

There are three bills that cover at least some aspect of reform to the pensions:

- SB 1902
- HB 1319
- HB 1543

Without getting too deep into the weeds of each bill's details, here's a summary of our concerns with a statement of which bills would enact the changes:

## 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 from Special Risk is a provision contained in HB 1543 only.*
- Reducing the 3% Accrual Rates for Special Risk. *Provision contained in all three bills.*
- Increasing the high 5 years to the highest 8 years. *HB 1319 actually removes the high 5 years and replaces it with total years of service – so if you have 20 years of service your average final compensation is calculated by 20.*
- Capping your retirement payment at 70% not the current 100%. *All three bills contain a cap, but HB 1319 caps it at 80% while HB 1543 and SB 1902 cap it at 70%.*
- Increasing Special Risk normal retirement age to age 60 or 30 years of service for anyone not vested by July 1, 2010. *All three bills contain language similar to this provision. However, this change is contained in a special study request to the Division of Retirement.*
- Implementing an employee contribution for retirement of 1% of salary. *This change is contained in a special study request to the Division of Retirement.*

## Municipal Retirement

- Capping your retirement payment at 70% not the current 100%. *All three bills contain a cap, but HB 1319 caps it at 80% while HB 1543 and SB 1902 cap it at 70%.*
- Changes the 185 premium tax law so extra money does not have to be spent on extra benefits. *SB 1902 and HB 1543 contain this change.*
- Increasing normal retirement age to age 60 or 30 years of service. *All three bills contain this change.*
- Majority of members on the Board of Trustees could not be active or retired pension plan members. *HB 1319 contains this change.*
- Caps retirement accrual at 2%. *HB 1543 contains this change.*

# Criminal Justice Budget Proposals are Released in the House and Senate

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Let the budget negotiations begin. The House and Senate Criminal Justice budget committees released the preliminary budget numbers this week and the results are mixed.

The Senate Criminal Justice appropriation is roughly \$140 million below the House's appropriation with the Senate cutting deep into the Department of Corrections. The Senate appropriation eliminates funding for 1, 847 Correctional Officer positions (mostly vacant) while privatizing existing work release centers. The Senate also reduces FDLE Special Agents by 17 (supposedly vacant) and eliminates Youth Custody Officers completely from the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The House reduces appropriations for Community Corrections *Staff* (emphasis on the word *Staff*, this means everyone not just the CPOs) to the tune of 450 and eliminates 15 positions from FDLE Special Agents at the Tier One level.

## Obvious questions:

How many of these positions are vacant in Corrections, Community Corrections, and FDLE? The official position is that the majority of the positions are vacant, but as we all know that never holds true. We are working with the Department of Corrections and FLDE to make sure that if the cuts hold up through the budget negotiations process no one loses a job. Our biggest obstacle will be getting the House and Senate to lower the number of cuts to ensure it is just vacant positions. Typically, the initial appropriations are inflated to allow movement in the negotiations.

Will the House refuse the Senate's position to privatize work release centers? At the moment, the answer is yes. Our strategy is simple – work to keep the House position.

Can we save the Youth Custody Officers in Juvenile Justice? The House does not eliminate funding for the positions so we will work to keep the House position.

# **PBA Membership: Please Contact Your Legislative Leadership**

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If there was ever a time to get involved - this is the time. If you are thinking this is why I pay dues so that the PBA can handle this issue, our response is that we *are* handling it and we need to you to call for our strategy to work. We have the PBA Legislative Connection up and running. All you need to do is call our toll free number and then follow the instructions.

The Legislators listed are the leadership of the House and Senate, which means they have the power to stop these proposals. Please contact each of them and ask them to protect your pension, your health insurance, and, for state officers, your job.

Dial the PBA's toll-free number 1-800-733-3722. When you get the PBA greeting, dial the extension listed below to connect to the respective legislators. You will have to call back to the PBA for each legislator.

Senate President Jeff Atwater	Ext 7025	<a href="mailto:atwater.jeff.web@flsenate.gov">atwater.jeff.web@flsenate.gov</a>
Senator Mike Haridopolos	Ext 7026	<a href="mailto:haridopolos.mike.web@flsenate.gov">haridopolos.mike.web@flsenate.gov</a>
Senator JD Alexander	Ext 7017	<a href="mailto:alexander.jd.web@flsenate.gov">alexander.jd.web@flsenate.gov</a>
Speaker of the House Larry Cretul	Ext 6022	<a href="mailto:larry.cretul@myfloridahouse.gov">larry.cretul@myfloridahouse.gov</a>
Representative Dean Cannon	Ext 6035	<a href="mailto:dean.cannon@myfloridahouse.gov">dean.cannon@myfloridahouse.gov</a>
Representative Will Weatherford	Ext 6061	<a href="mailto:will.weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov">will.weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov</a>
Representative David Rivera	Ext 6112	<a href="mailto:david.rivera@myfloridahouse.gov">david.rivera@myfloridahouse.gov</a>