



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

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For the Week Ending April 23, 2010



**Matt Puckett**  
*Deputy Executive  
Director*

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## **Two Long Weeks – Nothing Much Changes**

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When I was in the United States Army, I would always dread guard duty. Hours and hours of nothing to report, and of course, the commander wanted all of it memorialized in the official log. I have refused to do such nonsense in my civilian life, so therefore I have refrained from issuing a Capitol Report over the last two weeks. You should know this about me – when there's nothing new to say, I will not waste your time and mine by saying it.

Early this week, retirees did get a bit of good news, which we broadcast to the membership through our [e-pba](#) mailing list. The House came through for state employees and retirees by reversing its position to eliminate the retiree Health Insurance Subsidy. We had been anticipating this decision, but nothing had become official until this week. So for everyone concerned with that particular issue, you can rest now – it is not happening this year.

Now for our list of worries:

- 1) SB 2022 which will require every single *active* member of the Florida Retirement System to Contribute a *quarter percentage point* into their retirement account.
- 2) House Budget will enact a 3% across the board salary reduction for all state employees. Under this plan, a department or agency could implement the reduction by cutting salaries, positions, or furloughs.

Both of these remaining issues will be resolved by the presiding officers of the House and Senate during the final budget negotiations.

# Blackwater Bailout Continues

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**Ken Kopczynski**  
*PBA Lobbyist*

The Florida Legislature continued in their efforts to bailout the private Blackwater River Corrections Facility run by the GEO Group. This is in spite of the large number of empty beds in the Department of Corrections, concerns over an extra 224 bed added to the budget line, and an on-going FBI investigation into the prison.

According to the Criminal Justice Estimating Conference, a legislative group that projects the number of beds needed in the prison system, DOC has capacity for another 4,000 to 5,000 inmates. This is because of a number of issues to reduce the inmate population. Instead of waiting for the need, first the Senate leadership then the House budget chair bought into GEO's claim that it was better to pay \$24.5 million to open this prison than to leave the inmates in older DOC facilities.

Blackwater was authorized in 2008 at 2,000 beds but the budget, driven by GEO Group, added 224 beds to the prison without building any more beds. Even the architect for the project, Carter Goble Lee, wrote that the extra 224 beds would jeopardize public safety and violate accreditation standards. The PBA sees these extra 224 beds as a 10 percent giveaway to the politically connected GEO Group.

On top of all this, it recently was reported that the FBI was looking into how this prison came about in the first place. A citizen from Santa Rosa County where this prison was built, filed a complaint with both the State's Attorney Office and the Federal Prosecutors' Office that questioned how this prison deal came about in the first place.

One has to wonder why considering all of the above that the Legislature would even consider funding this boondoggle.

# Battles in the Government War

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The battle about the size and scope of Florida's government is nearing its conclusion this year. We are in the last week of the 2010 Session. Once the gavel falls, the battle to determine the next set of legislators begins in earnest. These battles are part of the large scale war that is waged throughout our government.

Next year's size and scope battle is going to be one of the fiercest on record. The state will be dealing with a general revenue shortage in the range of \$5 – 6 Billion. The Florida PBA is going to make sure that the people who occupy the seats in the Legislature, Cabinet, and Governor's Office have your best interests in mind.

If you have been following the session, it should NOT come as a big surprise that *many* of the so called *small government* folks really just want your jobs, pay, and pensions reduced or eliminated to help their own set of *political friends*. From some in elected officials, *Small Government* purity is just a great slogan for a bumper sticker, or a misspelled sign. We plan to identify *these* officials for you, but it shouldn't be too hard for you to discern those we miss by their rhetoric.

Please drop the party labels and look closely at the person when making your voting decisions this election. Dig into who supports them and try to find out why. Then come to realize this, when push comes to shove you need friends in the Legislature, Cabinet, and Governor's Office willing to stand up for you and your family. You *have to vote* in order to get your friends there.

If you take away nothing else from this session (the likelihood of this nothing scenario is running quite high), take away this – we are going to need a lot more friends in the Legislature, Cabinet, and Governor's Office next year.