

STATE REPRESENTATIVE BETTY REED

District 59

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2009 LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER



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Economic Development Policy Committee
Education Policy Council
State Universities & Private Colleges Appropriations Committee

**GREETINGS FROM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE BETTY REED
DISTRICT 59**



Dear friends and neighbors:

First and foremost, I would like to offer my humble thanks for the opportunity to serve as your "voice in Tallahassee" during the 2009 Legislative Session. I am very appreciative of your support and your many correspondences.

My colleagues and I worked tirelessly this legislative session staying focused on Florida's economic recovery making sure we met the needs of our working families and communities. However, I am greatly disappointed by the potentially harmful cuts to programs that provide health services to Florida's seniors and the fact that major insurance reforms remain a concern while our state is still at risk should a major storm come our way.

Despite these major disappointments, I am extremely proud of the legislature for securing much-needed funding for Florida's school system, cracking down on the illegal sale of prescription drugs and agreeing to expand the eligibility to Florida KidCare.

Other key issues we tackled this year included renewable energy, the Medically Needy Program, nursing home diversion slots, Floridians with disabilities and the securing of funds to open a new Veteran Affairs nursing home.

Again, it is an honor to serve you in the Florida House of Representatives. I am committed to improving the quality of life for all Floridians. I urge you to contact my office if there is anything I can assist you with. My staff and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Betty Reed



State & Local Projects

Governor Charlie Crist unveiled the Florida Office of Economic Recovery's Web site, www.FlaRecovery.com, that allows the people of Florida to review state and local governments' use of federal funds coming to Florida as a result of the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.



Florida KidCare



After several years of tireless efforts, the Legislature agreed this year to expand eligibility to Florida KidCare, a subsidized health insurance program for uninsured children under 19 from low and moderate-income families. To apply for Florida KidCare, call 888-540-5437 or Visit: www.floridakidcare.org



Vote

I am thrilled by the defeat of legislation that could have frustrated efforts by many Floridians to participate in elections and organize political campaigns. Among its provisions, the bill would have made it illegal for observers to get within 100 feet of a line of voters.



**“Signing Day Is Not Just For Athletes”
District 59’s Academic Letter Of Intent Signing Day Dinner**



Rep. Reed hosted District 59’s Third Annual National ACADEMIC Letter of Intent Signing Day Dinner. The dinner honored students from the Class of 2009 that graduated from Hillsborough County public high schools with six (6) or more college-level Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The dinner was a re-enactment of the high school ATHLETIC letter-of-intent signing day.

Jorge Bolanos, Justin Gonzalez, Simon Munoz-Alvarez, Rep. Reed, Garrett Elston, Keith Jenkins, Abnerd Joseph, Emir Myers, Nykida Brown, Ana Maria Ortiz, Brittany Saffold, Imani Clark, Lachelle Davis, Qualessa Richardson, Lindsay Bell, Donovan Celerin, Frank Wade, Mohammed Moustafa, Myles Johnson, Devonte’ Clark, Arthur James, Danielle Grant, Nikki Hinds, Saresa Thomas, Adelia Joseph, Arianna Moore, Vanity Shields

2009 Budget Summary

The 2009 Legislative Session was dominated with debate on how to resolve a \$6-billion budget deficit. When the dust cleared the Legislature passed a \$66.5 billion budget that will raise taxes, fees, university tuition, drain trust funds, and cut programs crucial to meeting the needs of Floridians, especially seniors and those who rely on our state’s health care services.

Despite the budget’s insufficiencies, I am pleased that the budget makes use of substantial portions of the \$5.3 billion made available to Florida as a result of the federal economic recovery package approved by President Barack Obama and Congress.

Additionally, I am pleased that the Legislature has put to use nearly \$2 billion in federal economic recovery funds approved by President Barack Obama’s administration. These dollars will help give schools and teachers the resources they need in hopes that we will one day have a world-class education system.

I had hoped for a much better outcome for Florida, and that’s why I voted **“NO”** to this budget’s final passage.



Sponsored Bills by Rep. Reed



**Legislature Sends
CS/CS/HB 57
and CS/HB 597
to the Governor to
Become Law**

- **Law Enforcement Explores** -
CS/CS/HB 57 Sponsored by Rep. Reed and CS/SB 508
by Sen. Anthony Hill.
- **Homelessness** -
CS/HB 597 Sponsored by Rep. Reed and CS/SB 1054
by Sen. Victor Crist.

Police Explorer Bill 2009



Other Sponsored Bills by Rep. Reed

- HB 421- Resident Status for Tuition
- HB 613 – Commissioner of Education
- HB 755 – Water Conservation
- HB 1037 – Community Corrections
- HR 9053 – Dr. Walter L. Smith

Insurance

The Legislature took modest steps this session to stabilize the property insurance market, ease rate hikes for many Floridians, and give all consumers new options for choosing a property insurance company of their choice.

For instance, dramatic rate hikes for customers of state-run Citizens Insurance were set to go into effect January 2010. But under legislation passed during the session, those increases will be capped at 10 percent instead of increases of 40 percent and higher. This step should provide some comfort to home and business owners and bolster the actuarial soundness of Citizens’ rates.

However, Florida’s Hurricane Catastrophe Fund, which provides backup financing for private insurance companies, is not sufficiently financed --- and long-term fixes are needed. Although the “CAT Fund” has approximately \$8 billion available, and could borrow up to \$8 billion more to cover claims, it still faces a potential shortfall of roughly \$12 billion should the state be hit by a major storm, a significant risk in light of the economy’s current volatility.

Furthermore, I am sorely disappointed by the Legislature’s decision to stop funding the tremendously successful “My Safe Florida Home” program, which provides free home inspections and other useful information to consumers. If this program expires, I am concerned that the state would be ignoring its responsibility to protect Floridians.

District 59’s 2009 Messengers

Jonathan Mitchell and Alex Harper



Each elected members of the Florida House is entitled to sponsor one Page and one Messenger to serve for one week during Regular Session.

For more information, contact:
Rep. Betty Reed @ 813/241-8024 or
Marie E. Shortz, Program Specialist
Email: pageandmessenger@myfloridahouse.gov

Healthcare

This year, the budget recognizes the need for increasing the number of nursing home diversion slots. As many as 17,200 of Florida’s frailest elders, who would otherwise be served in nursing homes under Medicaid, will soon be able to receive services in their homes and communities.

With the help of federal economic recovery funds, the Legislature met obligations to finance many crucial state and local health care programs.

I am also pleased by our successful efforts to fund the state’s Meds-AD program, which helps seniors purchase medications and the Medically Needy program, which provides essential health care for low-income families.

However, I am deeply disappointed by the decision to reduce Medicaid reimbursement rates to nursing homes and by potentially harmful cuts to programs that provide health services to Floridians.

Education

The total budget for colleges and universities will increase slightly, from nearly \$3.2 billion to a proposed \$3.4 billion in the year ahead. But the additional funding comes at a cost: higher tuition paid by our students and their families.

The proposed higher education budget raises university tuition by up to 15 percent a year and caps Bright Futures scholarships. The move saves the state \$34 million but will cost students at least \$197 more per year at schools with 8-percent tuition hikes, and nearly twice that for students who choose schools that raise tuition by 15 percent.

However, there will be a 30% increase in need base grants for students that can’t afford the additional increases.



Rep. Reed and UCF Students
Ted Williams, Yolando Smith, and M. Ortiz