

Important Steps to Stabilize Homeowners Insurance

Floridians deserve both options and financial stability in our private insurance market. This session, the Legislature worked hard to pass property insurance measures to protect Florida's homeowners while beginning to rein in the financial risks posed by the state's continued involvement in the insurance market.

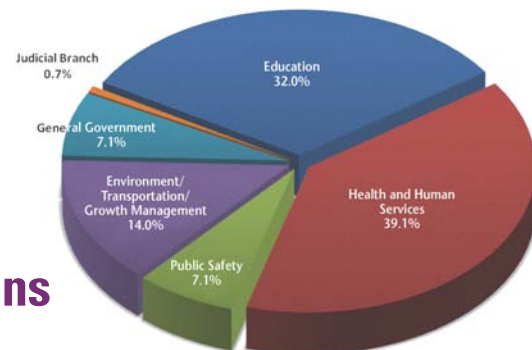
The Legislature felt that Floridians are in the best position to choose a policy that meets their individual situation, even if the premiums for that policy are higher than for other policies. Having an insurance market with more options for consumers will increase competition, empower consumers and attract more private insurers to the market.

In these unprecedented economic times in Florida, we faced the challenge of stabilizing our insurance market to reduce

the risk of exposure of taxpayers without breaking the bank for Florida's policyholders. On January 1, 2010, individuals insured by the state's Citizens Insurance were facing a dramatic mandated overall average statewide rate increase – from in excess of 40 percent for personal residential multi-peril policies to as much as 140 percent for commercial properties.

Realizing that increases of that magnitude would be unsustainable to Florida's economy the Legislature capped Citizens rates at an increase of 10% and now Citizens is one important step closer to actuarial soundness. A reduced rate increase is good for Citizens policyholders and reducing the risk of a financial disaster in the wake of a hurricane is good for Florida taxpayers. This legislation passed with bipartisan support in both legislative chambers.

Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Appropriations



Policy Areas	Appropriations All Funds
Health and Human Services	\$26,043.4
Education	\$21,272.9
Transportation, Environment, Growth Management	\$9,293.5
Public Safety	\$4,755.4
General Government	\$4,719.9
Judicial	\$451.3
Grand Total	\$66.54 billion

2009-2010 Appropriation Highlights for House District 51

St. Petersburg Clearwater Airport	\$2,305,060
DOT – Bryan Dairy Road from Starkey to 72nd Street	\$11,711,600
SR 686 from SR 688 to Alt US 19	\$2,383,000
Pinellas County Advanced Traffic Management System	\$2,701,949
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority	\$3,494,011
Adults with Disabilities Funds	\$584,050
Florida Holocaust Museum	\$145,584
Public Schools Workforce Education Performance Based Incentives	\$375,660
Public Schools Workforce Education Program Funds	\$24,999,188
St. Petersburg College Baccalaureate	\$5,884,412
St. Petersburg College Lottery Funds	\$6,777,857
St. Petersburg College Program Funds	\$52,828,537
USF, St. Petersburg Education and General Activities	\$23,021,485
USF, St. Petersburg Lottery Funds	\$1,156,995
USF, St. Petersburg capital expenditures PECO	\$400,000
St. Petersburg College remodeling/renovation, capital expen. PECO	\$5,061,371



Representative Janet Long
51st House District

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Committees:

- Military and Local Affairs, Ranking Democratic Member
- Economic Development and Community Affairs Policy Council
- General Government Policy Council
- Insurance, Business and Financial Affairs Policy Committee
- Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee

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REPRESENTATIVE
Janet C.
Long

2009 Report from Tallahassee

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I am pleased to serve as your voice in the Florida House of Representatives at a challenging time for our state government.

The recently ended 2009 legislative session was one of the toughest on record. My priorities throughout the session were to focus on Florida's economic recovery, creating new jobs, public education, health care, public safety and fighting for middle-class families and those who need the services of our state.

In writing a new state budget, we faced a \$6 billion revenue shortfall. The Legislature responded by reducing programs and services, draining trust funds and increasing fees, many of which will impact working-class families. For these and other reasons, I voted against the budget because I don't think it adequately met our state's needs.

I am pleased to say that I was one of the first in the Legislature to endorse the use of new federal economic recovery dollars approved by President Barack Obama and Congress that were used to help balance the proposed new \$66.5 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2009-10.

This year, my colleagues and I in the Florida House of Representatives undertook a number of serious initiatives that will improve the lives of our friends and neighbors:

- In public safety, we championed legislative efforts to crack down on the illegal sale of prescription drugs, and we passed legislation to require law enforcement to provide victims of sexual battery with vital information about services.
- In the education arena, we won approval for a measure to engage more students in meaningful activities in their schools and communities. We also repeatedly demanded that education funding not be cut despite tough economic circumstances.
- Throughout the session, we fought for seniors and people who rely on health care services, and won approval for legislation to require Medigap coverage for certain patients needing dialysis or kidney transplants.

It has been a pleasure to serve you in the Legislature and I look forward to next year's session as well as your continued support. Please do not hesitate to call my office at 727-545-6421, or email janet.long@myfloridahouse.gov.

It is an honor to represent our community in the Florida House of Representatives!

With warm personal regards,

Janet C. Long
Janet C. Long

Here's an update on my major legislative activities during the 2009 session:

Keeping Government from Spending Tax Dollars to Influence Elections

I am happy to report that the Senate companion to House Bill 591, which I sponsored, was enacted into law by the Legislature. This bill prohibits local governments from spending public funds on political ads or electioneering communications. While it will not take away the rights of leaders to communicate their views and to educate the public, it will prohibit them from spending your tax money to tell you how to vote. On June 10th this bill was signed into law by the Governor.

Pinellas Park Water Management District

This is a local issue that has become very important to me since residents first brought this to my attention when I was first elected. Serious concerns were brought up, ranging from the district's high millage rate (almost 3 mills for most of the last thirty years), duplication of fees and services between SWFWMD, the district, the county and cities, to the lack of professional management and accountability.

Since then, much time and effort has been put into an analysis and solution to this excessive and duplicative taxation. After a thorough report was released from OPPAGA (Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability), it was determined that the most legally appropriate, fair and feasible solution would be to sunset the District upon completion of its final project in 2011 or significantly restrict the District's responsibilities to include only maintenance and repair, and dramatically reduce its millage rate.

The taxpayers who reside in the district would then vote in a referendum on whether or not they would like to continue its existence. Should voters choose to dissolve the district, responsibility for maintaining the drainage system would be transferred to the respective cities. The City of St. Petersburg adopted a resolution in support of a special act to sunset the district.

The bill which I sponsored to accomplish this, HB 607, passed unanimously through one of the two committees to which it was assigned. Unfortunately, we were unable to have this bill heard on the House floor. We are very hopeful that through continued discussions with all stakeholders involved, we may come to some agreement and get a similar bill passed next year.

Efforts to Consolidate Services

Recent budget difficulties have made it apparent that what we have been doing these past many years is not working. In order to get better results we need to move forward with more innovative thinking, "outside of the box", to solve the nearly crippling economic challenges Florida is facing today.

I have determined that locally, costs can be reduced and tax relief provided to the taxpayers of Pinellas if duplicative services such as Fire and EMS can be consolidated. This is an issue I will be working on during the interim before the next session.

Domestic Violence

For the third year in a row, the domestic violence bill I sponsored, HB 79, was successfully (and unanimously) passed through every committee and received 118 'Yeas' and 0 'Nays' on the House floor. This bill closes a loophole to protect women who are physically assaulted, stalked, harassed, raped, or have had their property damaged by individuals they have dated. There is a glitch in the law whereby victims of dating, sexual, or repeat violence are left to file a civil complaint with the clerk of the circuit court when their restraining order is violated rather than receiving immediate assistance from law enforcement.

The Council Against Sexual Violence supports this bill. Many women and children will be saved by this piece of legislation. We will be filing it again next year and will focus on the dollars that will be saved by getting these violent criminals off the streets. I will continue working on this bill until it passes the Senate and is signed by the Governor!

Seatbelt Enforcement Toughened

The Dori Slosberg and Katie Marchetti Safety Belt Law was passed so passengers in a pickup truck are no longer exempt from the safety belt requirement and eliminates the requirement of enforcement of the Florida Safety Belt Law as a secondary action. **This will undoubtedly save lives.**

Prescription Monitoring Bill Passes

Unfortunately, our state has become nationally known as the Pill Capital of the country. This is a title referring to the great ease with which one may obtain very dangerous and potentially lethal prescriptions from doctors and pain clinics across the state. This problem has extended from our schools and college campuses to drug runners driving across several states to purchase pills for illegal sale.

Finally, something has been done. This very important piece of legislation, which I co-sponsored, was passed by the Legislature and requires the Department of Health to establish a comprehensive electronic database system to monitor the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances. It will prohibit certain physicians from practicing in a pain-management clinic that has not registered with the Department of Health. With more oversight into this dangerously exploited practice, lives will be saved and families all across the state might be spared the pain and suffering associated with prescription drug abuse.



Breast Cancer Bill & Resolution Pass:

I would like to take a moment to highlight a couple of important women's health issues that made it through this grueling session. **I am pleased to share with you the passage of House Resolution 9123, designating October as "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" in Florida.** Also, the Breast Cancer Detection and Screening bill was passed unanimously in both houses and is awaiting the signature of the Governor. Once it becomes effective on July 1, 2009, this piece of legislation will establish a breast cancer early detection and treatment referral program within the Department of Health. This is truly a triumph for women and families in Florida who have lost loved ones and suffered at the hand of this terrible disease.



Protecting our Beaches and Natural Resources

Florida's coastal waters are the backbone of our tourism industry. People are drawn to visit and live in Florida because of its miles of pristine coastline. However, accidental releases from wastewater treatment facilities and other sources can put up "Closed" signs on our beaches, and rob Florida's coastal communities of vital tourism revenue. That is why I supported legislation which will provide better coordination, quicker action, and more thorough investigation to help mitigate the dangers of these spills to the public and damage to our tourism industry.

In addition, I voted against a bill which was proposed near the end of session which would open the way to drilling for oil and natural gas as close as three miles from our beaches. I believe this is an issue that demands far more study and debate than the time we had left this session when this issue was brought before us.

Sen. Justice Press Conference: Rep. Janet Long and Sen. Charlie Justice, post press conference on Reducing Hurricane Risk.

