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Representative Mark Flanagan

Republican - House District 68

2001 Legislative Update

MANATEE AND STATE FUNDING

PROJECT NAME	FUNDING	PROJECT NAME	FUNDING
Foster Care Review _____	121,796	Manatee Glens	
Bradenton Reclaim water _____	184,135	Children's Baker Act _____	480,573
Community High School _____	1,500,000	Note Marine	
Family Emergency Treatment Ct. _____	1,000,000	Sturgeon _____	500,000
First Step Mothers & Infants _____	618,000	Manatee Research _____	325,000
Foundation of Dreams _____	80,000	Stock Enhancement _____	350,000
Health Occupations Bldg. _____	2,850,000	Shark Sawfish Research _____	125,000
Lakewood Ranch Corp. Ctr. _____	4,360,751	Jason _____	100,000
Manatee Children's Srv. _____	1,000,000	SeaTrek _____	900,000
Wares Creek _____	1,500,000	Keating Maritime Ctr. _____	500,000
Emerson Point Classroom _____	600,000	Senior Resource Center _____	2,000,000
Special Need Shelter Generator _____	300,000	South FL Museum _____	750,000
Manatee Technical Institute _____	800,000	Red Tide Research _____	1,000,000
Manatee Rural Health Srvs. _____	150,000	Manatee County Nursery School _____	450,000
Prescription Drug Purchase _____	500,000	CSX Track - Bradenton _____	575,000
Obstetrics Assistance Indigents _____	320,000	MCC Information Technology _____	800,000
Dental Services _____	200,000	State of FL	
		Dreams are Free _____	510,000

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COMMITTEES ASSIGNMENTS

Banking, Chairman

Education Appropriations

Juvenile Justice

Congressional Redistricting

Council for Competitive
Commerce

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your State Representative. The 2001 Legislative Session concluded on May 4, 2001, and now that I am back in the district I want to share with you some of the highlights. I believe these changes will improve our community and the quality of our lives.

The Legislature has committed itself to an agenda of no new taxes, excellence in education, improved care for the elderly, and focus on our families and small businesses. By remaining focused on these principles, we were able to provide \$175 million in tax relief while also providing an overall increase in education funding of \$826 million. We also enacted comprehensive election reform and passed several new laws to help our senior citizens. Here are just a few other items of interest:

- ◆ We passed a \$48.6 billion budget that included increases in both education spending and health and human services spending while still providing significant tax relief for our families.
- ◆ We updated Florida's voting systems to eliminate punch card, paper ballots and mechanical lever machines to address the concerns raised in the previous election and to ensure fair and equal treatment of all of Florida's voters.
- ◆ We reformed the prescription drug laws to make more safe and affordable generic drugs available to consumers.
- ◆ We enacted reform in the state's nursing home industry, including increased staffing ratios, more frequent reporting on staffing ratios, and stiffer fines for poor-performing homes.
- ◆ We continued our commitment to eliminating the intangibles tax and removed 700,000 filers from the tax rolls by raising the exemption level to \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for couples.
- ◆ We reformed the judicial nominating process eliminating the Florida Bar's monopoly on selecting judges by allowing the governor, who is directly accountable to the people, to appoint nine-member nominating commissions.
- ◆ We modernized Florida's state government employment practices by implementing a plan that rewards workers for productivity, performance, and accountability, as opposed to only seniority.
- ◆ We required every school district to undergo a financial audit every five years to help ensure that as much money as possible is making its way into the classroom.

As you will see in the following pages, the 2001 Session was a productive one. As always, your opinions and concerns are very important to me. I am just a phone call away, and I value your thoughts and ideas to make Florida better.

Your Servant,

LEADING THE WAY ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Over the past few years the Florida Legislature has made a strong commitment to protecting Florida's environment by passing a number of preservation programs including Everglades restoration and Florida Forever. This year, the Legislature appropriated millions of dollars to fund the state's environmental efforts and—equally important—passed several bills that will provide strong leadership and accountability for these programs.

The Legislature passed two very important bills aimed at ensuring the success of Florida's major environmental preservation programs.

The Legislature passed two very important bills aimed at ensuring the success of Florida's major environmental preservation programs. One initiative will use performance measures to gauge the success of individual land purchases and land improvements as part of the Florida Forever program. Another measure will keep the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan on track by preventing unnecessary delays and creating a fast-track permitting process for this vital project.

Florida's ability to protect the environment also got a boost this year when the Legislature expanded the authority of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to allow them to anticipate and prevent environmental disasters resulting from poorly run phosphate mining facilities.



"BALLARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER, VICTORIA SOMERS, DISCUSSES THE JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM WITH REPRESENTATIVE FLANAGAN."

HONORING THE VALUE OF TEACHING

The tragedy of school violence hit close to home this year when Barry Grunow, one of Florida's own teachers, was gunned down while teaching at Lake Worth Middle School. In previous years, we have passed legislation to create a safe learning environment, but when a teacher makes the ultimate sacrifice, we want to, in some small part, provide support for their family. The "Barry Grunow Act" will provide a lump sum payment, healthcare coverage, and tuition waivers to the family of any teacher or school-based administrator killed on the job.

Recently, we have asked our teachers to take on more and more responsibility for keeping our children safe and maintaining control of their classrooms. This year, the Legislature felt it was time to step up to the plate and begin providing statewide liability insurance to protect our hard-working teachers from any lawsuit that results from them doing exactly what we have asked of them.

In order to attract and retain more teachers, and because we recognize that teachers are one of Florida's most valuable resources, the Legislature put \$152 million into teacher recruitment and retention this year, including a bonus of at least \$850 for teachers with a satisfactory evaluation. In total, funding for our public schools increased by \$826 million – money we hope will school districts will use for higher teacher salaries, critical classroom supply needs and to reduce overcrowding.

INCREASING EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

Education has received historic increases in funding for the past few years. This year, even with a somewhat tighter budget, the Florida Legislature increased overall

education funding by \$826 million. This boost, added with the record increases over the last 5 years, equals an 88 percent rise in the investment we've made in education.

While we are proud of our financial commitment to education, we also recognize the importance of ensuring that your tax dollars are spent in a fiscally responsible manner. To achieve this goal, my colleagues and I passed legislation that will require all 67 school districts to undergo a financial audit every five years. By carefully looking at how each school district is spending its money and by providing suggestions for improvement, we can ensure that as much money as possible is making its way into the classroom – not being wasted on bloated bureaucracy.

In addition, low-performing school districts will be required to increase the percentage they spend in the classroom to ensure that our teachers and students are given the tools they need to succeed.



"REPRESENTATIVE FLANAGAN VISITS WITH CHILDREN FROM THE MANATEE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE FARMWORKER'S PROGRAM DURING THEIR SCHOOL TRIP TO TALLAHASSEE."

HELPING RURAL FLORIDA

The Florida Legislature worked hard this year to help rural communities revitalize their economies, while still maintaining their rural character and heritage.

The Legislature succeeded at passing a number of dramatic reforms specifically targeting rural communities that will help them to preserve family farms, allow innovative planning and development, increase land values and provide an incentive for business development by changing current laws that unfairly hinder rural areas from achieving a strong and robust economy.

We also modernized the state's approach to rural needs. Some of these include reforming the tax assessment on certain agricultural property to make it more equitable for farmers; protecting the agricultural industry and public/

private research institutes from the damage caused by eco-terrorists; and including the aquaculture industry under the umbrella of the disaster loan program.

It is important to secure a positive future for our rural communities and the agricultural industry. As Florida's economy continues to expand, the Legislature wants to ensure that rural communities have an equal opportunity to entice businesses and provide decent employment for their residents.

ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC GROWTH WHILE PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Businesses create jobs and better job opportunities for our citizens, which strengthens our economy. In order to remain competitive with other states, it is important to offer businesses incentives to locate to Florida. That is why this year's budget provided \$144.4 million to ensure that Florida's business climate is conducive to the creation of jobs, business location and expansion, international trade, and positioning Florida for future advances in the space program.

These incentives, combined with our efforts, will ensure that all Floridians enjoy the expanded economic opportunities available today and benefit from better jobs with higher wages.

Also, the Florida Legislature passed a bill to help consumers get out of the never-ending payday loan cycle without eliminating the valuable service of short-term loans. Additionally, Florida became the first state to pass a simplified communications tax that will allow customers to easily understand how they are taxed for phone, cellular, satellite and cable services.

We will continue our efforts to make sure state government encourages businesses to grow and prosper and not stifle the entrepreneurial spirit that is the life-blood of Florida's economy.

NURSING HOME REFORM

End-of-life care is an issue that eventually affects every one of us. We all have someone who we care about who either currently requires some form of professional care or who will some day. For that reason, the crisis that currently exists in our nursing home industry is a cause for concern for us all. This year, the Florida Legislature spent several months debating how we could best reform this industry and the end result is a product of which we all can be proud.

One of the quickest ways to improve the quality of care received in nursing homes is to require the staff to spend more time with the resident every day. That is why my colleagues and I are raising the number of hours a nurse must spend caring for a nursing home resident. We have given nursing home regulators more power to impose fines

and revoke or deny licenses based on patterns of deficiencies in a home. We limited the amount of punitive damages that may be awarded to make sure that the money we provide to improve care is not eaten up in attorneys' fees.

By improving the quality of care for the residents of nursing homes, while helping to make sure that the good facilities are able to continue operating, the changes we made will improve the end-of-life care in Florida dramatically.

IMPROVING HEALTH CARE

Improving the quality and availability of health care continues to be a priority of the Florida Legislature. To that end, my colleagues and I enacted several measures to make sure as many Floridians as possible have access to the highest quality medicine and care available.

We pushed for outreach programs to increase enrollment in the Florida KidCare program, which provides low-income families with health insurance for their children. In addition, we eliminated the counties' local match requirement, freeing up an extra \$11.5 million of local money to be used for these services. We

restructured the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund, which was financed with money received from the tobacco industry settlement. These funds will be used to pay for health and human services programs for Florida's children and the elderly. By reallocating these resources, we secure more money for future expansion of these programs.

We created the Mary Brogan Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program to provide cancer screening, evaluation and treatment for women who otherwise would not be able to afford it.

We made it easier for consumers to have access to more generic drugs that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. This will significantly reduce the cost of prescription drugs for many Floridians without compromising their health.

