



## State Legislative Agenda Update

The Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce is engaged in state legislative matters and serves our members by identifying issues of importance to the business community and assigning it to one of three possible advocacy levels: educate, support or lead.

After passing 295 new bills and resolutions, the fewest in more than a decade, the Florida Legislature "Adjourned Sine Die" at 3:35 a.m. on Saturday morning, officially ending the 2011 Legislative Session. The 2011 Legislature faced one of the state's toughest budget challenges in our history. The continuing slow recovery of the Florida economy, the expiration of federal stimulus funding assistance, and the increase in citizens' demand for services (particularly Medicaid and other social services) driven by the economic downturn created perhaps the largest needs-to-available-resources deficit that Florida has ever faced.

Contained below are the outcomes of critical issues of importance to the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce as well as the Tampa Bay business community as a whole.

### Lead

The Greater Tampa Chamber identified the proposed consolidation of the Tampa-Hillsborough Expressway Authority (THEA) as a priority issue during the 2011 State Legislative Session and was successful in its efforts to stop the consolidation into the Florida Turnpike Enterprise.

- **THEA** - The Greater Tampa Chamber worked in collaboration with the THEA and launched a grassroots effort to save the expressway authority and keep it local. The Chamber created the website [www.keepexpresswayslocal.com](http://www.keepexpresswayslocal.com) as a means to raise awareness regarding the importance of local control over transportation projects. Both the Chamber and THEA were successful in this endeavor and will be working with elected officials over the summer to discuss alternatives to consolidation into the Florida Turnpike Enterprise.

### Support

The Greater Tampa Chamber has worked alongside the Port of Tampa for the last few years to eliminate the burdensome and duplicative TWIC card regulation mandated by the state. This year, the legislation was finally passed and signed into law by the Governor at the Port of Tampa last week.

- **The Port of Tampa**- The seaport security legislation eliminates certain Florida requirements that are unnecessary, costly and redundant given the strong federal security law now in place. By eliminating duplicative regulations, the legislation bolsters port stakeholders who have been at a competitive

disadvantage with ports from other states and have faced costs and administrative burdens not required by ports from any other state.

The Greater Tampa Chamber understands the need to support the economic engines of our region and during this legislative session the Chamber's support was instrumental in mitigating cuts from the reductions initially proposed.

- **Hillsborough County Schools** - Hillsborough County was able to receive its Gates Grant exemption to SB 736, The Teacher Success Act. State funding to public schools was cut nearly 8% - a \$144.00 per student reduction that takes Florida back to 2001-2002 funding levels.
- **Medicaid** – A 12 percent Medicaid reimbursement reduction to all Florida health care providers was passed and all of the Tampa area hospitals who serve Medicaid patients will be impacted by this change. It is estimated that the cuts will impact Tampa General Hospital by about \$20M per year and other hospitals are evaluating the impact on their revenues.
- **Moffitt Cancer Center** –Moffitt was successful in retaining their annual line-item appropriation of \$9.6 million. This maintains critical state support for Moffitt to sustain cutting-edge cancer research and train medical professionals. An appropriation of \$5 million to Moffitt from the Florida Biomedical Research Trust, which also supports existing cancer research programs.
- **Southwest Florida Water Management District**- The legislature pass a budget conforming bill which implements statutory changes to water management district budget adoption procedures.
- **University of South Florida** - The Legislature provided \$51 million to support USF System construction projects next year: however, the Governor vetoed all except \$35 million for Phase I of the new campus for USF Polytechnic. USF was the only state university approved by the Governor to move forward on the construction of a new PECO facility for FY 2011-2012.