

Item 10.d.
News Articles

Subject: Fwd: H2O Coalition Clips, 5/6/15
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Wed, May 06, 2015 9:57 am
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Date: May 6, 2015 at 9:43:10 AM EDT
To: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Subject: H2O Coalition Clips, 5/6/15

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/column/2228369>

Column: A water policy for all of Florida

By Wilton Simpson,
May 6, 2015
Tampa Bay Times

A few days ago we saw an unfortunate failure of leadership in the Legislature. As a businessman still somewhat new to the process, I was disappointed that the will of the majority was bypassed. By putting politics before the work of the people, too many important issues were left stuck in the balance.

One of these issues is the future of our environment, particularly the protection and management of our water. Because of the impasse, no comprehensive legislation relating to Amendment 1 has yet been passed. I remain confident that in the budget consideration over the next several weeks, we will have another opportunity to work to ensure protection of Florida's natural resources. There are differing views on how to accomplish this goal.

Some people believe the only way to honor the intent of Amendment 1 is to purchase specific land owned by a sugar company in South Florida near the Everglades. Others, like me, see Amendment 1 as a holistic, statewide strategy to create long-lasting protections from the Panhandle to the Keys. I absolutely believe the Everglades are an important ecosystem worthy of preservation and protection; that is why during my first year in the Florida Senate I championed the Everglades Restoration Act. This act, which became law in 2013, affirmed our commitment to adequately fund the Everglades Restoration plan that was agreed to by the state of Florida and the federal government.

With that legislation, we set aside \$880 million to fund Everglades restoration. It's a multiyear project that was thoughtfully considered and analyzed before passage. For that reason legislators from both parties came together, unanimously passing this legislation, putting politics aside in the interest of good environmental policy.

Voters all over Florida didn't support Amendment 1 for the purpose of preserving one isolated area of the state. We have to evaluate and prioritize the usage and management of all of Florida's water supply, not any one region.

Amendment 1 will be in effect for 20 years. It is critical that we get the implementation right by using the best science. If any one area of the state becomes the solitary focus of this funding source, we have all missed the point.

We must create a statewide plan to restore and protect all environmentally sensitive areas. In my district extending into Central Florida we have watersheds fed by springs. Across the state there are beaches whose preservation fuels tourism economies. The quality of water in the Kissimmee River basin feeds areas to the south. The health of estuaries like the Indian River Lagoon matter; so too does the St. Johns River in Northeast Florida. All of these systems deserve to be made a part of Amendment 1 consideration.

For Florida's future, for clean water and an environment that generations can live a high quality of life in, I am

committed to getting this right.

In the Florida Senate, Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby, represents District 18, which stretches across parts of Hernando, Pasco and Sumter counties.

<http://www.ocala.com/article/20150505/OPINION/150509885>

Editorial: Second chance to get it right

Ocala Star-Banner
May 5, 2015

Florida House members bailed on the legislative session before passing a budget, but their inability to perform their most important duty isn't all bad news.

Their failure to approve a budget has left Amendment 1 funding still to be set. Hopefully the pause before the Legislature reconvenes in a special session will give lawmakers time to boost funding for land acquisition above the disgraceful levels that had been considered.

An overwhelming 75 percent of voters approved Amendment 1 last fall, only to see lawmakers deviate from its clear purpose of dedicating more funding toward land conservation. The latest House and Senate budgets would spend less than \$20 million for the purchase of parks and wildlife habitat under the Florida Forever program.

The amount is paltry when considering that Amendment 1 requires about \$750 million to be spent on land and water conservation in its first year — and that still only equates to less than 1 percent of the state's \$80 billion budget.

Many priority areas for conservation under Florida Forever remain unprotected, including land around the state's first-magnitude springs. Other projects in our region include preserving land that links Lochloosa Lake, Orange Lake and Paynes Prairie, not to mention the obvious ongoing need to insulate Silver and Rainbow springs from further degradation.

These kind of projects provide benefits for water quantity and quality. The depleted and polluted condition of our springs serves as an omnipresent warning about the condition of the aquifer that provides our drinking water supply. Some lawmakers claim the state lacks a need to protect additional land from development. State Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, infamously said that Florida shouldn't be known as the "hoarding-land state."

But Florida has returned to a growth rate of more than 350,000 people per year and is losing at least 75,000 acres of rural land annually, according to Tom Hctor, director of the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning.

Hctor wrote in the Tampa Bay Times that conserving land on the Florida Forever list would mean an additional 2 million acres of land is protected — but much more is needed to reach conservation goals.

There are signs at least some lawmakers are listening. The News Service of Florida reported last week that Sen. Rob Bradley, a Fleming Island Republican, and Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart, are calling for their chamber to boost funding for land acquisition to \$40 million or more. The money could be bonded to raise \$500 million for land purchases.

Bradley reminded his fellow senators that North Florida "has a lot of springs where land purchases are going to be a part of the overall strategy in making sure those can be preserved for all time."

House members failed to complete their only constitutionally mandated duty by walking out of the session early. But they might have given lawmakers a second chance to do right by the state and its voters by spending more of Amendment 1 funding on its main purpose: land conservation critical to protecting the aquifer and our water supply.

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/water/sierra-club-seeks-federal-protection-for-floridas-aquifer/2228421>

Sierra Club seeks federal protection for Florida's aquifer

By Times staff
May 5, 2015
Tampa Bay Times

Florida's aquifer needs special protection from being overpumped, the Sierra Club contends in a petition sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The club's Florida chapter has filed the petition asking the EPA to declare it a "sole source aquifer," a tool to protect drinking water supplies in areas where there are few or no alternative

sources. Such a declaration, carried out only after a public hearing, would require the federal government to give it greater protection and also offer grants and other financial assistance for avoiding pollution. The aquifer, which is the primary source of water for Florida's 19 million residents, is "threatened by ...over-pumping, pollution and waste," said Tom Larson, Sierra Club Florida chapter conservation chair.

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2015 session: To be continued ...

Jeff Burlew, Bill Cotterell and Sean Rossman, Democrat staff writers 5:39 a.m. EDT May 2, 2015

Lawmakers may be back in June to settle 'stark differences' in plans

There will be no hanky drop tonight at the Capitol, no revelers crowding the Rotunda toasting with red Solo cups.

This year's regular legislative session is expected to end quietly at midnight, with none of the usual pomp and circumstance — barring a last-minute order by the Florida Supreme Court, which has been asked to referee an acrimonious showdown between the House and Senate.

The celebration, if there ever is one, will have to wait, probably until late in June, after a special session to resolve the bitter stalemate between the chambers over expansion of health care to low-income Floridians and funding to safety-net hospitals treating the poor.

On Thursday, Senate President Andy Gardiner wrote House Speaker Steve Crisafulli to propose a special session June 1-20 to resolve each side's "stark differences."

"Given the severity of these issues, I believe an agreement to begin a special session on June 1 will provide the Legislature with the maximum flexibility to complete our work on the 2015-16 General Appropriations Act in an efficient and transparent manner," Gardiner said in the letter.

On Tuesday, the House, which is staunchly opposed to the Senate's plan for health-care expansion, abruptly adjourned sine die three days early. The Senate convened Wednesday, taking up what bills it could, but went on auto-pilot Thursday, waiting for an unlikely call from the president to bring them back.

Also Thursday, Senate Democratic Leader Arthenia Joyner of Tampa and other Senate Democrats filed an emergency petition asking the Florida Supreme Court to compel the House to reconvene.

House leaders have until 10 a.m. Friday to respond to the petition, the court ordered Thursday evening. Senate Democrats have until 12:30 p.m. Friday to counter the House's arguments.

Echoing an earlier letter Gardiner sent to Crisafulli, the Democrats said the House violated the state constitution when they unilaterally adjourned for more than 72 hours. The House contended the 72-hour rule only applies to breaks during a 60-day session, not at the end of one.

Crisafulli sent an email to House members Thursday night saying he strongly disagreed with the arguments by Senate Democrats.

"Accordingly, I have no plans to ask you to return to Tallahassee at this time," he said. "I look forward to filing our response tomorrow and will provide you with an electronic copy."

Sen. Bill Montford, D-Tallahassee, said in an interview he expected the clock to wind down on the regular session with no fanfare.

"Unless the House decides to come back to work, we'll finish our work unceremoniously Friday night at midnight," he said.

In other developments, Gov. Rick Scott said he will immediately begin work with House and Senate leaders on a state budget to keep state agencies operating, while a special commission figures out how to fund health-care issues that blew up the 2015 legislative session.

The governor's office issued a lengthy prepared statement, dealing mostly with Medicaid expansion under the federal Affordable Care Act and funding of the low-income pool (LIP) program for hospitals treating uninsured indigents. Scott indicated that he still wants his tax-cut package when the Legislature convenes in special session.

"Now that the Florida Senate and House have adjourned, we must immediately turn our focus to how we can work together to craft a state budget before July 1 that continues funding for critical state services," Scott said in a release.

Meanwhile, Scott is forming a special Commission on Health Care and Hospital Funding to untangle the Medicaid and LIP mess in the weeks before a special session.

"The commission will examine how taxpayer money supports hospitals, healthcare and insurance plans in Florida and what healthcare outcomes those entities provide for Floridians in return," Scott said. "It will also evaluate certificate of need laws in our state and how their elimination would increase competition and subsequently decrease cost."

The last day of session normally is a whirlwind, with lawmakers from the House and Senate brokering last-minute deals to hammer out a budget, the one thing they're required to do under the constitution.

When they're done – and sometimes it takes all night – the sergeants at-arms drop a handkerchief on the fourth floor between the two chambers to signify sine die, or the end of the session. Speech-making ensues by the governor, the speaker of the House and the Senate president.

The second-to-last day is nearly as hectic, typically. But with neither the House nor Senate in session, the Capitol was virtually deserted Thursday.

Stray groups of school students toured empty chambers; a few lawmakers emerged from their offices to interact with them, including Rep. Alan Williams, D-Tallahassee. Constituents who traveled to Tallahassee earlier in the week, before the regular session unraveled, strolled around the Capitol, some of them scoring a little face-time with their elected representatives.

Among them were Norm Audet and Christine Saint Louis, both public-transit bus drivers from Orlando, who came to keep an eye on transportation and fracking bills and measures affecting unions and public workers. Both were at the Capitol late in the session last year.

"It's like night and day," Saint Louis said. "Last year, there was so much commotion and so many people. It was packed. This year, it's like looking for the tumbleweeds to come through because there's nobody here."

Sharply divided Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott can't agree on next step
By Steve Bousquet and Kathleen McGrory, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau
Thursday, April 30, 2015 6:44pm

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Rick Scott and a bitterly divided Legislature darted in four different directions Thursday as Scott called for budget talks, senators suggested a special session in June, the House did not favor either idea and Democrats sued the House.

As Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, proposed a three-week session starting June 1 to craft a state budget, Senate Democrats marched to the Florida Supreme Court with an emergency petition that asks justices to rule on whether the House violated the state Constitution by adjourning Tuesday afternoon. Senators say it's unconstitutional for one chamber to shut down for more than 72 hours without the other's consent.

"The same men who make the laws should be compelled to obey them," said Senate Democratic Leader Arthenia Joyner, D-Tampa. She said she was acting without Gardiner's permission.

The high court ordered the House to formally respond by 10 a.m. today.

In a message to members late Thursday, House Speaker Steve Crisafulli stood his ground.

"We strongly disagree with the arguments that were filed by 13 Democrat members of the Senate and believe that the House's actions complied with the Constitution and the historic practices of both chambers," he wrote.

"Accordingly, I have no plans to ask you to return to Tallahassee at this time. I look forward to filing our response tomorrow and will provide you with an electronic copy."

A key House Republican, Rep. Richard Corcoran, R-Land-O'Lakes, said he had "serious doubts" the court would intervene.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach, said on Twitter that the Senate Democrats' action had no legal basis: "Individual senators have no standing and cannot act on behalf of the Senate in litigation," Gaetz said.

The Legislature finds itself in a crisis unique in its history, trapped by an ideological divide over whether to expand health care with federal tax money. The breakdown is compounded by term limits and a lack of trust between the two chambers.

The 2015 regular session crashed to a halt Tuesday when Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, abruptly adjourned and sent members home, blaming the Senate for demanding a federally funded expansion of health care that he said the House won't support. It was the first time in recorded history in Florida that one house shut down on a different day from the other.

After many days of silence and threats to kill senators' bills, Scott issued a statement Thursday that called on the Legislature to immediately resume work on the state budget in time for the July 1 start of a new fiscal year. Legislators answered with a collective yawn, as neither chamber responded.

Scott's statement raised side issues such as his support for a statewide commission to study hospital profits and his view that Florida should abolish a certificate of need process that requires state approvals before hospitals can add new beds. Scott used the word "Obamacare" six times in his eight-paragraph statement and he sided with the House, which insists that any talk of health care expansion be held separately from the budget; the Senate says they are connected.

"We should begin preparing a budget in the interim that could be taken up in a special session," Scott said, "without any (low-income pool hospital) funding and without any expansion of Obamacare."

In contrast to Scott's statement, Gardiner floated the idea of a special session from June 1 to 20 to pass a budget and to consider the Senate's Florida Health Insurance Affordability Exchange to help offset the phasing out of the low income pool (LIP) that reimburses hospitals for charity care to uninsured patients. The House opposes the exchange.

"There's nothing worse than for the governor to call us back and the chambers come in and there's still no agreement on the big picture of the budget," Gardiner said Thursday on the public affairs program Florida Face to Face on the Florida Channel. "What would not be productive is a rush to judgment and say we're coming back immediately, because it doesn't resolve anything."

In his letter to Crisafulli, Gardiner wrote: "Given the stark differences between the House and Senate approaches to health care funding and coverage, we believe clear guidance from the federal government is crucial regarding funding for services to the uninsured which hospitals across our state are legally required to provide regardless of compensation."

Senators have repeatedly asked Scott not to call for a special session until legislative leaders can develop a consensus.

Scott did not speak to legislative leaders. He was out of town Thursday, holding what his office called "political events" in South Florida that were not listed on his official schedule.

Florida Democrats were on the political trail as well, using the legislative stalemate as a tool to raise money on the eve of a federal fundraising deadline.

Times/Herald staff writer Mary Ellen Klas contributed to this report. Contact Steve Bousquet at bousquet@tampabay.com or (850) 224-7263. Follow @stevebousquet.