

Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida, Inc.

February 22, 2002
Volume XII, Issue 5

OH! THE GAMES THEY PLAY . . .

WHAT'S INSIDE:

	Page
Supporting School Readiness.....	2
Good News On.....	2
Actions on Bills This Week.....	3
Healthy Kids Match.....	7
Foster Parents Rights.....	8
Foster Youth Lobby.....	8
Fatherhood Commission Name.....	9



Helping all children succeed for life.
An initiative of the United Way of Florida,
Publix Super Market Charities, Inc. and
NationsBank



United Way of Florida, Inc.
307 E. Seventh Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32303
850/488-8287

It's only appropriate that the 2002 Legislative Session's highest profile issue – tax reform – has spawned the session's most vitriolic rhetoric and strategic political maneuvering. Allegations and ugly names have flown between the House and the Senate in recent weeks.

The House proclaims Senate President John McKay's tax reform package as the largest tax increase in Florida history. The Senate responds that its detractors are lying and misleading the public. Governor Bush calls for a transparent debate on the issue in his State of the State speech. Senate President McKay, following the Governor's announcement that he opposes the plan, mocks the Governor by himself calling for a transparent debate. Speaker Feeney's transparent attempts to have a transparent debate by stacking an "objective" committee to review the plan with conservative legislators already opposed to it. And the saga continues.

Such behavior is not unheard of between two chambers, or two parties, that are at opposite ends of the spectrum on a major issue. Of course, an interesting footnote is that the leaders who are casting aspersions on their counterparts are in the same party.

But this week, the House employed a novel strategy that will long be remembered. You might recall that the Senate passed its tax reform proposal about two weeks ago. However, the Senate did not send the bill to the House, intending to send it late in session when the Senate will have more leverage to gain support for the package vis-à-vis other important issues that are still on the table, particularly reapportionment. This week, the House may have effectively preempted the Senate. Speaker Tom Feeney convened the House in session, under the auspices of being a "Select Committee of the Whole" to deal with tax reform issues. Up for consideration? A proposed committee bill – by the Select Committee of the Whole – that mirrored the Senate bill. Debate was held. Opponents invoked the names of Lincoln, Madison, Jefferson, God, and the Constitution. And the House summarily defeated the proposed committee bill.

Having already defeated the legislation, the House has sent arguably the strongest signal possible to the Senate that, regardless of what transpires during the waning hours of session, it will kill the Senate's tax proposal. Legislators who voted against it this week will be hard-pressed to change their vote later.

Next up...the Senate's response. For those inspired by political intrigue and strategy, it doesn't get any better. For those hoping the session ends on time, it doesn't get any worse.

IS THE LEGISLATURE SUPPORTING SCHOOL READINESS?

When it passed the School Readiness Act in 1999, the Legislature envisioned a coordinated, efficient, and effective school readiness system run – within reasonable parameters - by local school readiness coalitions.

Earlier this week, a draft resolution voicing the thoughts of a local school readiness coalition chair alleged how the Legislature has – to date – stymied coalitions from achieving their missions. It concluded that if the Legislature continues its present course, coalitions should turn the school readiness system back to the state.

Judging by the responses, every coalition around the state feels the same frustrations; but, more on that later. The threshold question is, “Has the Legislature supported school readiness?”

The answer is clearly “Yes” and “No”.

On the “Yes” side, the Legislature has invested nearly \$100 million in new funds into school readiness in the last two years alone. This alone is significant. It placed school readiness in the Agency for Workforce Innovation which – while coalitions were nearly unanimous in their desire to have “school” readiness placed in the “school” system” - has been very supportive in helping the Partnership for School Readiness and local coalitions achieve their missions.

So, what’s the beef? In short, it revolves around two fundamental principles: quality and local flexibility. Coalition members – particularly private sector representatives whose participation is imperative if meaningful change is to occur – sit on coalitions for

one reason: to improve the school readiness system for the children and families in their communities. Yet, since their inception, the coalitions have been mired in administrative processes, and their flexibility to facilitate meaningful change has been hindered by state mandates and tight resources.

The most obvious example is the inability of coalitions to pay an enhanced Gold Seal rate for quality child care, thereby removing the most important tool coalitions have to promote quality and improve school readiness.

At this time, no other coalition has embraced the resolution’s proposal to abandon the effort. Indeed, while responses have been unanimous in their recognition of the frustrations and concerns voiced in the resolution, so too have they been unanimous in their stated commitment to continue fighting for what is best for the children in their communities.

We urge the 2002 Legislature to recognize the frustrations of local coalitions and to provide the flexibility and, within the confines of the tight 2002-2003 state budget, the resources that will help the coalitions succeed. If it doesn’t, coalitions will see a continued exodus of private sector members (as highlighted in the recent OPPAGA report), and with them will go the vision, dream, and hopes for a new and improved school readiness system.

On Friday, the House Fiscal Policy Committee passed budget amendments supporting school readiness. (see below)

GOOD NEWS ON.

SCHOOL READINESS. . . .

Friday morning the House Fiscal Policy Committee approved amendments to the draft House Appropriations Bill that would:

- Reinstate Florida’s Gold Seal Program;
- Enhance utilization of the Child Care Executive Partnership Fund; and
- Maintain current match levels for subsidized child care/school readiness funds.

PART C/EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The Senate has replaced the \$1.8 million in non-recurring TANF funds that were removed from the Part C/Early Intervention Program budget during the special session. As this Legislative Link went to press, it appeared the House was heading in the same direction.

Quote of the day...

Nothing is foolproof to the sufficiently talented fool.

ACTION ON BILLS THIS WEEK

SB 88- Learning Gateway Program (Pruitt) - This bill authorizes pilot projects in Orange, Manatee, and St Lucie Counties to identify and address learning problems in children from birth to age 9 earlier and more efficiently than currently happens.

Last Action: 2/21/02 CS by Senate Education Appropriations 7-0

SB 100 - Transportation Disadvantaged (Mitchell) - This bill revises fees for registration of certain trucks, trailers and motorcycles and for tag transfers and temporary tags to be deposited into Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund.

Last Action: 2/21/02 CS by Senate General Government Appropriations 5-0

SB 132 - Tobacco Products/Minors (Laurent) - This legislation prohibits the sale, offer for sale, or display of tobacco products under specified circumstances.

Last Action: 2/20/02 Passed Senate 37-0; In Messages

SB 218 - Disabled People/Seizure Disorders (Cowin) - This bill extends to people who have seizure disorders the right to be accompanied by a trained service dog in specified circumstances.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Passed Senate 37-0

SB 288 - Children/Continuances/Case Plans (Campbell) - This bill amends the law governing proceedings under chapter 39 by extending to all parties the right to request continuances in all dependency proceedings; limiting the period of continuances and extensions of time to 60 days total within a 12 month period except for extraordinary circumstances; and eliminating the mandatory 15 day periodic review hearings on shelter placement and makes them subject to the court's discretion.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by Senate Judiciary 8-0; Now in Health and Human Services Appropriations

SB 350/HB 561 - Parking Permits/Disabled Persons (Futch/ Ball) - This bill provides that certain advanced registered nurse practitioners and physician assistants may provide certification for disability required for issuance of disabled parking permit.

Last Action: 2/5/02 Passed House 117-0; 2/20/02 Passed Senate 39-0; Ordered enrolled

SB 392/HB 95 - Public Libraries/Computers/Obscenity (Wise & Campbell/ Trovillion) - This bill would require public libraries to install and maintain computer software or equivalent technology that prohibits access to obscene materials by minors.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable by Senate Comprehensive Planning, Local and Military Affairs 5-0; Placed on Calendar, on second reading

SB 414 - Long-term Care Ombudsman Program (Health, Aging and Long-Term Care) - This bill increases the maximum membership of local long-term care ombudsman councils; requires State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council to publish complaint information quarterly; and specifies training requirements for employees of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman & its volunteers.

Last Action: 2/20/02 Passed Senate 38-0; Now in House Messages

SB 484 - Subacute Pediatric Transitional Care (Silver) - This bill requires the Agency for Health Care Administration to conduct a study of medically fragile and medical-technology-dependent children in the state and to conduct a pilot program for a subacute pediatric transitional care center.

Last Action: 2/21/02 CS/CS by Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations; 4- 0

SB 576 - Persons With Disabilities (Wise) - This bill directs the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living to develop personal care attendant pilot program to serve persons with spinal cord injuries.

Last Action: 2/21/02 SENATE CS/CS by Finance and Taxation 8-0

SB 598/HB 751 - Community Mental Health Services (Peaden/ Murman) - This bill requires that DCF use certain funds to expand provision of community mental health services.

Last Action: 2/21/02 SENATE Placed on Special Order Calendar; Read second time

SB 632/HB 755 - Residential Group Care (Peaden/ Murman) - This bill prescribes the procedures for the mandatory assessment of certain children for placement in licensed residential group care; clarifies that DCF may place child who is in its custody in residential treatment center without prior approval of court; specifies that residential group care facility must be licensed as child-caring agency, etc.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Passed Senate 40-0; 2/19/02 CS by House Council for Healthy Communities 16-0

SB 636 - Controlled Substances (Burt) - This bill requires the Department of Legal Affairs to design and establish an electronic prescription monitoring system in Florida for certain controlled substances by July 1, 2003.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS/CS/CS by Senate Public Safety and Judiciary Appropriations 4-1; Now in Appropriations

SB 686 - Legal Proceedings/Minor Children (Children and Families; Judiciary) - This bill provides for the transfer of the guardian ad litem program to Statewide Public Guardianship Office; renames each guardian ad litem office as Circuit Office of Children's Representation; requires the office to establish a Circuit Office of Children's Representation in each judicial circuit; and requires circuit offices to provide representation for children in dependency proceedings.

Last Action: 2/21/02 CS/CS/CS by Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations 4-0

SB 920 - Health Insurance (Wasserman Schultz) - This legislation prohibits individual and group health insurance policies from excluding coverage for a benefit if a determination has been made by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that the exclusion of that benefit under any employer's health benefit plan violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978.

Last Action: 2/18/02 Favorable by Senate Banking and Insurance 7- 4; Now in Senate Health, Aging and Long-Term Care

SB 992/HB 835 - Theft from Age 65 or Older (Futch/ Gardiner) - This bill creates a specialized statute for theft victims who are 65 years of age or older, reclassifying penalties for theft when the offender knew or had reason to believe that the victim was 65 years of age or older.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable by House Council for Healthy Communities 15-0; Placed on Calendar

SB 1016 - Tobacco Settlement/Proceeds (Burt) - This bill requires the Governor, in consultation with the Attorney General, to report by a date certain on the status of the tobacco settlement agreement and formula for calculating annual payments.

Last Action: 2/21/02 SENATE Favorable by Finance and Taxation 8-0; Now in Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

SB 1112 - Public Records/ Guardian ad Litem (Garcia) - This bill provides an exemption from public records requirements for specified identifying information relating to the staff and certified volunteers of the child guardian ad litem programs and their spouses and children.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by Senate Governmental Oversight and Productivity 7-0; Now in Rules and Calendar

SB 1150 - Medicaid Overpayments (Saunders) - This bill specifies additional requirements for the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of Legal Affairs Department and Medicaid integrity program. It extends whistle-blower protection to employees of Medicaid providers reporting Medicaid fraud or abuse and allows AHCA to take action against licensee in certain circumstances.

Last Action: 2/18/02 CS/CS by Senate Criminal Justice 6-0; Now in Health and Human Services Appropriations

SB 1272 - Child Support/ Health Care Coverage (Peaden) - This legislation requires that the court issue an order for health care coverage for a minor child in a proceeding for dissolution of marriage rather than an order for health insurance.

Last Action: 2/20/02 CS by Senate Children and Families 7-0; Now in General Government Appropriations

SB 1486 - Assault and Battery (Wise) - This bill provides enhanced penalties for offenses of assault, battery, aggravated assault, and aggravated battery if offense is committed on the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, elected Cabinet officer, member of the Legislature, mayor or chief head of municipality, member of city council or city commission, member of county commission, public defender, elected constitutional officer, or interscholastic sports official.

Last Action: 2/18/02 CS by Senate Criminal Justice 6-0; Now in Public Safety and Judiciary Appropriations

SB 1500/HB 1283 - Parents' & Children's Day (Mitchell/Ausley) - This bill renames "Children's Day" as "Parents' & Children's Day" and changes the designated day for celebration.

Last Action: 2/21/02 On Committee agenda - Senate Governmental Oversight and Productivity

SB 1714 - Nursing Homes/ Electronic Monitoring (Brown-Waite) - This proposal requires AHCA to conduct a one year pilot project to demonstrate the use of electronic monitoring equipment in two private nursing homes in different parts of the state.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by Senate Health, Aging and Long-Term Care 9-1; Withdrawn from committees of reference and Re-referred to Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; Appropriations

SB 1808 - Fla. Center for Nursing (Silver) - This bill authorizes the Board of Nursing to collect additional revenues that are voluntarily paid by nurses upon licensure and licensure renewal to fund Florida Center for Nursing.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable by Senate Finance and Taxation 8-0; Now in Health and Human Services Appropriations

SB 1824/HB 949 - Sexually Violent Offenders (Peaden/ Trovillion) - This bill changes the length of time for providing written notice to the multidisciplinary team and the state attorney of the release of a person from total confinement who has been convicted of a sexually violent offense.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Council for Healthy Communities 16-0; Placed on Calendar

SB 1974/HB 1209 - Crime Victims' Rights (Crist/ Gardiner) - This legislation requires the circuit court administrator to provide the clerk of the court with victim rights information.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Crime Prevention, Corrections & Safety 9-0

SB 2002 - Newborn Infant Screening (Wasserman Schultz) - This legislation authorizes Children's Medical Services to convene a study group to conduct comparative research regarding the infant screening programs currently operating in other states.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by Senate Health, Aging and Long-Term Care; 8-0; Now in Governmental Oversight and Productivity

SB 2012 - Paternity/Child Support/Genetic Test (Peaden) - This bill creates an administrative process for establishing paternity for certain Title IV-D cases and provides for statewide application and implementation of the pilot program for administrative establishment of child support orders.

Last Action: 2/20/02 CS by Senate Children and Families 7-0; Now in Judiciary

SB 2030 - Mental Health Treatment (Peaden) - This bill provides additional criteria for involuntary examination at a mental health receiving facility and for involuntary placement for mental health treatment under the Baker Act.

Last Action: 2/20/02 CS by Senate Children and Families 6-0

SB 2114 - Public Libraries/Funding (Garcia) - This bill authorizes municipalities to receive operating grants for public libraries.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by Senate Comprehensive Planning, Local and Military Affairs 5-0; On Committee agenda-- Governmental Oversight and Productivity, 02/26/02, 2:00 pm

HB 163 - Sexual Offenses/Elderly or Disabled (Paul) - This bill provides change in ranking for second-degree felony conviction for lewd or lascivious battery upon an elderly person or disabled adult.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Council for Healthy Communities 16-0; Placed on Calendar

HB 297 - Florida Healthy Kids Corporation (Littlefield) - This bill authorizes the Healthy Kids Corporation to establish and manage an operating fund equal to 25 percent of estimated annual expenditures.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable by House Council for Healthy Communities 13-2; Placed on Calendar

HB 415 - Prostitution/Substance Abuse (Farkas) - This bill requires certain offenders to be screened for substance abuse and requires offenders who test positive to attend a treatment program under certain circumstances.

Last Action: 2/19/02 CS by House Council for Healthy Communities 15-0

HB 615 - Community Health Center Access (Bilirakis; Murman) - This bill creates "Community Health Center Access Program Act" and provides for expansion of federally qualified health centers to provide comprehensive primary and preventive health care services.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable by House Council for Healthy Communities 16-0; Placed on Calendar

HB 775 - Adoption (Mahon) - This bill reduces the time period within which action must be filed to nullify adoption or termination of parental rights on grounds of fraud or providing false information; provides time limitation for use of scientific testing to show probability of paternity; requires notice to and written consent from registrant in paternity registry for termination of parental rights pending adoption, etc.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 2 amendments by House Judicial Oversight 6-3

HB 821 - Substance Abuse & Mental Health (Bean) - This bill deletes authority of DCF to use unit cost methods of payment in contracts for provision of services for local substance abuse and mental health programs.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable with 2 amendments by House Health and Human Services Appropriations 13-0; Now in Council for Healthy Communities

HB 911 - Mandated Health Benefit Coverages (Farkas) - This bill requires the Office of Legislative Services to contract for completion of report on existing and proposed mandated health insurance benefit coverages.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 3 amendments by House Health Regulation 6-0

HB 947 - Dependent Child/Psychotropic Medications (Ryan) - This bill provides requirements for issuance of a court order authorizing dispensing of psychotropic medication to child in shelter status or foster care. It provides for prior review of child's medical history and evidence demonstrating that treatment is appropriate for child's condition.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Judicial Oversight 10-0

HB 1163 - Sexual Assault Counselors (Fiorentino; Harrell) - This bill provides for confidential communication between sexual crime victim and trained volunteer at rape crisis center; expands privilege of refusal to disclose

certain information to include communications between victim and trained volunteer; and prohibits disclosure of certain identifying information regarding sexual crime victims by public officers or employees.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Judicial Oversight 10-0

HB 1219 - Patient Safety Improvement Act (Bowen; Murman) - This bill creates the Florida Patient Safety Center, a statewide, academically based center that will serve as the designated resource for patient-safety-related research, education, and policy information.

Last Action: 2/19/02 Favorable by House Health and Human Services Appropriations 12-0; Now in Council for Healthy Communities

HB 1223 - Pregnancies/Termination (Bean; Kilmer; Murman) - This bill revises requirements for reporting terminations of pregnancies by medical directors and physicians.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 2 amendments by House Health Regulation 7-3

HB 1333 - Health Education (Wilson) - This bill authorizes school-based AIDS education incentive grants.

Last Action: 2/19/02 HOUSE Favorable by General Education 6-5

HB 1415 - Organ-transplant Services/Medicaid (McGriff; Goodlette; Harrell; Green) - This bill provides Medicaid coverage for certain organ-transplant services.

Last Action: 2/21/02 HOUSE Favorable with 1 amendment by Health Regulation 7-0

HB 1443 - Children's Services (Barreiro) - This bill provides for the creation of a council on children's services in any county that has home rule charter.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable by House Local Government & Veterans Affairs 8-0

HB 1455 - Family Court Reform (Murman) - This bill provides legislative intent regarding developing a unified family court model to facilitate comprehensive resolution of legal and non-legal needs of children & families.

Last Action: 2/21/02 Favorable with 1 amendment by House Judicial Oversight 8-0

-
- ***By the end of 2000, the average credit card holder in the United States had \$8,123 in credit card debt. (Newsweek, August 27, 2001)***
-

HEALTHY KIDS MATCH SQUEAKS BY

House Bill 1137, filed by Representative Nan Rich to eliminate the Healthy Kids Local Match, sailed – on a weak breeze – out of the House Fiscal Policy and Resources Committee on Tuesday. Numerous representatives of a broad-based coalition, including United Way of Florida, testified in support of the legislation. However, although no one testified against it, the Committee engaged in lengthy discussion regarding 1) the pros and cons of doing away with the match, 2) the interests of all Committee members to ensure health care coverage for children eligible for Healthy Kids, and 3) the fiscal realities that are causing legislators angst when they think about replacing the \$11.5 million currently paid by communities throughout the state with state funds. In the end, the bill passed the Committee by a three-vote margin. It likely would not have passed had its next stop not been the Health and Human Services Appropriations Sub-Committee. Several of the members voted for the bill only because they believe it is most appropriately the province of the appropriations committee, given its fiscal impact.

The Senate companion bill, SB 142 by Senator Saunders, has passed one committee and is also now in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Sub-Committee.

FOSTER PARENTS RIGHTS OUTLINED IN BILL

SB 1098/HB 853 provide legislative findings and intent regarding the role of foster parents as participants in the child welfare system. The legislation, sponsored by Senator Garcia and Representative Lerner, respectively, does the following:

- Creates the "Foster Parent Act."

Identifies the circumstances under which the Department of Children and Family Services may remove a child from a foster home after denying the foster parent's application for adoption. When a licensed foster parent has applied to adopt a foster child who has resided with the foster parent for at least 6 months and who has previously been permanently committed to the legal custody of the department and the department does not grant the application to adopt, the department may not, in the absence of a prior court.

- Specifies 14 responsibilities of the department with respect to foster parents and 17 rights and responsibilities of foster parents, many of which are currently in administrative rule, operating procedures or other statutes.
- Requires the department and each agency providing foster care services under contract with the department to implement the act and prepare an annual plan for implementation in the department's service districts. The plans shall be submitted to foster parents for comment.

SB 1098 has been approved by the Senate Children and Families Committee and is now in Judiciary. HB 853 was passed unanimously by the House Judicial Oversight Committee on Thursday.

To view this bill on-line, visit On-line Sunshine at www.leg.state.fl.us and type in the bill number in the box at the top of the homepage.

-
-
- *"Nobody can influence me. Nobody at all. And a woman still less." . The ex-Shaw of Iran.*
-
-

FOSTER YOUTH LOBBY LEGISLATORS

Among the regular attendees in the Council for Healthy Communities last week were several advocates who stood out. These were foster youth who had come to Tallahassee to solicit support for House Bill 245, the "Road to Independence Act of 2002" by Representative Detert, which is designed to enhance integration and access to services that provide foster children with life management, employment and education skills to ensure a successful transition to adulthood. Low participation in and awareness of the program is attributed to a lack of clear state policy. This bill updates current state law to be consistent with the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. Florida has provided enough state funding to draw down all of the possible federal dollars under this program; the award for federal fiscal year 2001 was \$8 million.

Supporters of the bill hope that it will increase access to available services. DCF reports that only 924 of the 4,361 eligible youth were served by this program last year. Of eligible youth:

- 3,401 are age 15-17 and still in foster care. Under the existing program they should receive support

services such as coordination of existing education and employment services to prepare for self-sufficiency at age 18.

- 934, who are age 18-21, can receive continued guidance and Medicaid as they become independent.
- 26 are former foster children now age 22 or 23 and currently enrolled full time in post-secondary education who are eligible for continued services.

The bill is Detert's response to the concerns of two foster youth who approached her last year. One of these teens, now 18, had lived in 17 foster homes since the age of 3. Despite a full agenda, Council Chairman Fasano encouraged the foster youth to address the council. The State Youth Advisory Board President requested the council's support for the legislation. Thanks to the efforts of these young people, HB 245 was approved by a unanimous vote and now heads to the House floor with the support of Speaker Feeney and Governor Bush. The Senate companion bill, SB 996, is awaiting action by the Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.

FATHERHOOD COMMISSION TO CHANGE NAME AND MISSION

The Commission on Responsible Fatherhood was established in 1996 to raise public awareness of fatherhood issues, identify barriers to the involvement of responsible fathers and promote strategies to help dads be the best parents they can be. In anticipation of increased federal funding for efforts that promote marriage and fatherhood, proposed legislation repeals the Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and creates the Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives.

Under House Bill 1821, the Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives will:

- Develop a report that details comprehensive statewide strategies for Florida to promote safe, violence-free, substance abuse-free, respectful, nurturing and responsible parenting.
- Develop a report that makes recommendations on how to increase the availability of and access to parenting and relationship skills education and training, and to encourage and support the formation and maintenance of two-parent families and family structures that are best for the children.
- Produce and promote a promising practices manual or tool that highlights successful efforts at promoting marriage and Florida families and family life.
- Develop a community awareness campaign to promote community collaboration and coordinated grass-roots programs that show how people, advocates and agencies can work together to promote marriage in Florida families.
- Serve as an information clearinghouse for research findings on poverty, violence and other social forces and their effects on families, and innovative approaches to the delivery of services necessary for the formation and maintenance of strong families.

In partnership with the state, the Fatherhood Commission currently funds more than \$1 million in programs statewide. The bill provides that the Commission on Marriage and Family Support Initiatives will maintain the current connection with the Ounce of Prevention Fund and will support and continue any community based programs established by the Fatherhood Commission. The bill defines the membership of the Commission and provides that the chair of the Fatherhood Commission at the time of the effective date shall serve as the chair of the new commission for at least one year. It requires an annual report and sets a repeal date of June 30, 2007, allowing for reenactment.

This move is supported by the Commission for Responsible Fatherhood. House Bill 1821, sponsored by Representative Lynn, was approved unanimously by the Committee on Child and Family Security and now moves to the Fiscal Responsibility Council. The Senate companion bill, SB 1684, has not yet been heard.

For more information: www.floridafathers.org

"If I wasn't talking, I wouldn't know what to say." - Chico Rasch, past New York Islanders Goaltender

"The thing that's kept Jeff around is his longevity." - Don Smith, Defensive End with the Atlanta Falcons, on his long-playing teammate Jeff Yates.

WORLD'S THINNEST BOOKS

How To Get To the Super Bowl by Dan Marino
Things I Can't Afford by Bill Gates
Things I Would Not Do For Money by Dennis Rodman
The Wild Years by Al Gore
Mike Tyson's Guide to Dating Etiquette
Spotted Owl Recipes by the Sierra Club
The Amish Phone Directory
Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

UNITED WAY OF FLORIDA
307 East Seventh Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Theodore G. Granger
President & Editor

Lynn Groves
Success By 6 Coordinator

Julia Cunningham
Staff Support

phone-----850/488-8287
fax-----850/681-9137

Legislative Link is published by the United Way of Florida, Inc. for our members who may reproduce this newsletter for staff, volunteers, and agencies. All others must call 850/488-8287 for reprint permission