

Legislative Link

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

WHAT'S INSIDE:

	<u>Page</u>
Early Childhood Intervention	2
Important Legislative Dates.....	2
Bills Heard This Week.....	3
What About	7
President Bush's Proposed Cuts	7-8
Snapshot of the Florida Legislature	8
UWOF 2006 Issue Papers.....	9



United Way of Florida

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

NEW YEAR. SAME ISSUES.

Yes, every legislative session has its own character, defined by the issues, discussions, and circumstances surrounding it. Last year's session, for example, was defined by death – and the circumstances surrounding the deaths – of two brutally slain girls by registered sex offenders, the death of Terry Schiavo, and the death of Representative David Coley. The drama, legislative debate, and legislation that resulted from three of these four events dominated the 2005 legislative landscape.

At this point, we don't know what will characterize the 2006 session. Timing is everything, and the timing of unforeseeable circumstances to come will put the session into context. What we do know, however, is that many issues from last year will repeat themselves and almost all of them relate to money: class size, budget surplus, tax cuts, insufficient service dollars, tobacco revenues, juvenile justice funding, child welfare equity funding, healthy start funding, KidCare outreach funding, affordable housing trust fund cap and appropriation, Part C funding and funding for services for the disabled, control of elder service dollars and reconfiguration of the service system in the elder arena, before- and after-school funding, disaster preparedness and recovery, tort reform . . . the list goes on. Only time will tell how these, and multiple other issues raised by the 3,000+ bills that will be filed for consideration by the 2006 Legislature, will help to shape the 2006 session.

Legislative debate will be impacted to a large extent by the fact that the Governor's seat, half of all State Senators (20) and all 120 House members (together, 87% of the 160 member Legislature) are up for election in November. The 2006 Legislature has \$3.2 billion more to spend next year than it did this year. How the new money will be divied up will be subject to the annual push and pull of issues and advocates, as legislators up for election attempt to position themselves favorably for their individual elections, and party leaders attempt to position their parties as well.

Two issues that dominated legislative debate during the last two sessions and the two special sessions that were called to address them - Medicaid reform and voluntary prekindergarten - will largely be off the table in 2006. Legislative leaders believe these issues have been substantively addressed and it is too soon to go back and change the laws that were so recently passed to address them. This means that school districts will likely be placed in the unenviable position of trying to figure out how to squeeze 300 hours of pre-k classes into the summer. A difficult task at best. Other than the annual fight surrounding Medicaid vision and hearing services, one of the only real Medicaid battles may shape up around AHCA's waiver to place elders into managed care in eight counties in the Panhandle and central Florida.

The issues above and others will be at the forefront of legislative debate this session. It will be interesting to see which of them – or which other issues – will ultimately define the session. Regardless, it's time to get down to it...Have a great session!

Welcome to Your First 2006 Legislative Link!

As always, your *Legislative Link* will keep you up to date on legislative activities relating to human service and other issues of interest to United Ways, United Way agencies, and United Way supporters. It will be published weekly during the 2006 Legislative Session; in your email each Friday afternoon, highlighting legislative activity during the week.

During the course of the session, if you have any questions or comments regarding the *Legislative Link* or any issues it addresses - or should address - please don't hesitate to contact the United Way of Florida. Have a great session!

IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE DATES

March 7, 2006

Regular Session Convenes & Deadline for filing bills for introduction

April 25, 2006

50th day – last day for regularly scheduled committee meetings

May 1, 2006

All bills are immediately certified

May 5, 2006

60th day – last day of Regular Session

PROVEN BENEFITS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

As part of a recent study, the RAND Corporation synthesized what is known from the scientifically sound research literature about the short and long term benefits from early intervention programs. The study focused on programs that provide child development services from the prenatal period until kindergarten entry that had scientifically sound evaluations. Nineteen early intervention programs were reviewed, all of which demonstrated significant and often sizeable benefits in at least one of the following domains: cognitive and academic achievement, behavioral and emotional competencies,

educational progression and attainment, child maltreatment, health, delinquency and crime, social welfare and program use, and labor market success. The bottom line is that the estimates of benefits per child served, net of program costs, range from about \$1,400 per child to nearly \$240,000 per child. Viewed another way, the returns to society for each dollar invested extend from \$1.80 to \$17.07.

To access a copy of the study, go to www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/rb9145.

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? Is it an odd, or an end?

BILLS HEARD THIS WEEK

(Some information below is excerpted from legislative staff analyses)

HB 49 – Caregivers for Adults (Meadows)

HB 49 creates the Florida Caregiver Institute, Inc., as an independent not-for-profit corporation administratively housed within the Florida Policy Exchange Center on Aging (FPECA) at the University of South Florida. Its mission is to foster the development of care giving for adults as a non-licensed paraprofessional activity and promote the use of nationally recognized best practices information by non-licensed caregivers.

LAST ACTION: 3/8/06 HOUSE Favorable with CS by Elder & Long-Term Care

SB 492 – Violent Video Games (Diaz de la Portilla, King, and others)

SB 492 prohibits a person from selling or renting a violent video game to a minor and prohibits a minor from playing a violent video game in a video arcade. This bill requires that any violent video game imported or distributed in Florida must display a specific label.

This bill authorizes an “enforcing authority” to seek injunctive relief and civil penalties. Additionally, this bill declares a violation of the act a second degree misdemeanor and a subsequent violation a first degree misdemeanor.

The Florida statutes currently prohibit the sale of material that is deemed to be harmful to minors. “Harmful to minors” is categorized in the statutes and case law as material that is characterized by its sexual content. Material has not been deemed to be “harmful to minors” because it is characterized by violence.

LAST ACTION: 3/8/06 SENATE Favorable by Criminal Justice

SB 642 – Lead Poisoning Prevention Screening and Education Act (Miller)

SB 642 creates the “Lead Poisoning Prevention Screening and Education Act.” The bill expands the Department of Health’s (DOH) health education responsibilities for prevention and identification of lead poisoning by establishing a multifaceted, statewide educational program designed to increase public awareness of the hazards of childhood lead poisoning, primarily because of exposure to lead-based paints in older buildings. The bill creates a collaborative public information initiative sponsored by the Governor, the Secretary of Health, and private industry representatives to produce and distribute public service announcements and other materials that contain culturally and linguistically appropriate information.

The bill establishes a statewide screening program for early identification of persons at risk of lead poisoning, including requirements for screening in Florida’s Medicaid program. The bill requires the development of guidelines for medical follow-up on children identified with elevated blood-lead levels, and a surveillance system for geographic areas with the highest prevalence of children with elevated blood-lead levels.

The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have termed excessive absorption of lead as “one of the most common pediatric health problems in the United States today, and it is entirely preventable.” Approximately 310,000 U.S. children aged one to five have blood-lead levels greater than the CDC recommended level of 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter (ug/dL) of blood.²

Lead poisoning can affect nearly every system in the body. Because lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. Lead poisoning can result in learning disabilities, behavioral problems, delayed cognitive development, interference with metabolizing calcium, reduced heme syntheses (or the body’s ability to manufacture red blood cells), reduced kidney function, and damage to the central nervous system and, at very high levels, seizures, coma, and even death. The damage to the central nervous system is not reversible.

.....

Reasons why the English language is so hard to learn:

The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.

Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.

Bills Heard this Week (continued)

SB 642 continued

The main source of lead exposure among U.S. children is lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust found in deteriorating buildings. Lead-based paints were banned from use in housing in 1978; however, approximately 24 million housing units in the U.S. still contain deteriorated leaded paint and elevated levels of lead-contaminated house dust. More than 4 million of these dwellings are homes to one or more young children.

LAST ACTION: 3/8/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Judiciary

SB 714 – Annual Intangibles Tax (Atwater)

Chapter 199, F.S., imposes two different intangible personal property taxes: an annual (or recurring) tax is imposed at the rate of 0.5 mill on the value of stocks, bonds, notes, and other intangible personal property; a non-recurring tax is imposed on obligations secured by liens on Florida realty at the rate of 2 mills. Individuals and businesses are currently obligated to pay an annual (recurring) tax on stocks, bonds, notes, governmental leaseholds, and interests in limited partnerships registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Current law exempts from the annual (recurring) tax \$250,000 for each natural person and \$500,000 for each natural person and spouse filing a joint return. The law also provides a \$250,000 exemption for corporations and other legal entities.

This bill repeals the 0.5 mill annual (recurring) tax imposed on stocks, bonds, notes, and other intangible property. No change is made to the 2 mills non-recurring tax imposed upon obligations secured by liens on Florida property.

On February 10, 2006, the Revenue Estimating Conference estimated that this bill would result in revenue loss of \$130.6 million in fiscal year 2006-07 and \$161.2 million in fiscal year 2007-08.

LAST ACTION: 3/8/06 SENATE Favorable by Commerce and Consumer Services

PCS/SB 840 – School Readiness Equity Allocation (Fasano)

This Proposed Committee Substitute revises the requirements for the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) to submit a recommended formula for the allocation of School Readiness funds to the early learning coalitions. It provides that AWI must submit the recommended formula to the Governor and to the Legislature by January 1 of each year, instead of to the Governor and to the Legislative Budget Commission for approval. The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2006.

LAST ACTION: 3/9/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations

SB 1034 – The Florida Mental Health Act (Rich)

Senate Bill 1034 adds marriage and family therapists (MFTs) licensed under chapter 491, Florida Statutes, to the list of mental health professionals who can execute a certificate authorizing the involuntary examination of an individual believed to be dangerous to her, himself, or others because of a mental illness. The bill also authorizes MFTs to determine if the services recommended in a treatment plan for an individual being considered for involuntary outpatient treatment are clinically appropriate. It requires any evaluations performed by an MFT to be included in any documentation provided to a treatment facility director when an individual is ordered to involuntary inpatient placement.

LAST ACTION: 3/9/06 SENATE Placed on Calendar, second reading

SB 1062 – Coordinated 311 Nonemergency System (Diaz de la Portilla)

The bill, as amended by the Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee, establishes within the Department of Community Affairs a matching grant program to provide funds to local governments for the implementation and operation of “311 nonemergency and other government services telephone systems.” The bill authorizes the department to review and prioritize grant applications, and to fund them to the extent that funds are appropriated by law or made available from private sources.

SB 1062 continued

In 1997 the Federal Communications Commission designated “311” as a national, voluntary, non-toll, three-digit telephone number for non-emergencies. This designation was prompted by concerns relating to the misuse of 911 emergency systems. Evaluations of 911 usage during the mid-1990’s indicated that 50 to 90 percent of all calls to 911 were not actual emergencies. Similar to 911 systems, 311 call centers generally operate 24 hours a day, take requests for service only inside their jurisdictions and often dispatch assistance.

Emergency management officials in Miami-Dade County made extensive use of the recently activated 311 system during the 2005 hurricane season. During the activations for Hurricanes Rita, Katrina and Wilma, 311 handled more than 250,000 calls immediately before, during and after the storms.

LAST ACTION: 3/9/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations

SB 1224 – Prosperity Campaigns (Rich)

SB 1224, as amended by the Commerce and Consumer Services Committee, creates a Florida Prosperity Campaign Council (Council) composed of 20 members including:

- Four individuals appointed by the Governor who represent a different Prosperity Campaign in the state;
- One member each of the Senate and the House of Representatives (appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively);
- The Chief Financial Officer or his or her designee;
- The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee;
- One representative each from the following organizations:
 - Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign;
 - The Florida Bankers Association;
 - The Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs);
 - The Florida Credit Union League;
 - The Florida League of Cities;
 - The Florida Association of Counties;
 - The Florida Association of Realtors;
 - United Way of Florida;
 - Leadership Florida;
 - The Florida Chamber of Commerce;
 - A nonprofit or community-based, low-wage worker organization; and
 - The Florida JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy.

Members of the council serve 2-year terms beginning July 1, 2006.

The Council’s responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Assisting in the development of Prosperity Campaigns throughout the state;
- Coordinating with Prosperity Campaigns to assist in the development of new programs;
- Developing implementation plans for new programs using the best practices of existing and new in-state and out-of-state Prosperity Campaigns;
- Coordinating financial literacy programs within the campaigns and in the schools;
- Working with businesses and agencies to develop a package of services for citizens participating in Prosperity Campaigns;
- Working with the Department of Education in developing financial literacy instruction to be part of the life management skills course pursuant to s. 1003.43; and
- Performing other duties as deemed necessary and directed by Workforce Florida, Inc.

SB 1224 continued

The council must submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives annually beginning June 30, 2007. The report should detail the effectiveness of the council including the progress made in establishing new campaigns, barriers to their establishment, the partners involved, and recommendations for the future. The report should also detail information about existing campaigns, including statistics regarding the constituents served and the funds received.

The bill also adds instruction in financial literacy to the list of topics to be covered in the one-half credit life management skills course that high schoolers must take to graduate. The financial literacy instruction must focus on the importance of financial management, savings investments, credit scores, savings and other related topics.

LAST ACTION: 3/8/06 SENATE Favorable with CS by Commerce & Consumer Services

SB 1258 – Child Care Facilities (Hill)

SB 1258 requires a full level 2 screening to be conducted annually on child care personnel employed in a licensed child care facility, rather than being limited to an FDLE and local law enforcement re-screening every five years, as is currently required by administrative rule. The bill also creates a requirement for a level 2 re-screening of child care personnel after a break in employment greater than 90 days.

Last Action: 3/7/06 SENATE Favorable with 1 Amendment by Children and Families

SB 1314 – Services for Seniors (Rich)

SB 1314 authorizes each county, by ordinance, to create an independent special district to fund services for seniors throughout the county. The county must obtain approval, by a majority vote of those electors voting on the question, to annually levy ad valorem taxes that may not exceed 0.5 mills of assessed valuation of all properties within the county which are subject to ad valorem county taxes. The referendum required to approve the ad valorem tax levy must be held at the first general election immediately following adoption of the ordinance creating the independent special district.

The bill provides for such districts to be governed by a senior council consisting of 11 members, including: the executive director of the area agency on aging; the county director of human services; one member of the board of county commissioners for a 4-year term; two nonvoting members of the legislative delegation for the county appointed by the delegation chair for a 4-year term; two representatives of the Florida League of Cities for a 4-year term; and four members appointed by the Governor for a 4-year term, initially staggered, with reappointment for one additional term permitted, and who meet certain additional qualifications.

The Florida Constitution specifically provides for four types of local governments: counties, school districts, municipalities, and special districts. There are 67 counties, 67 school districts, 408 municipalities, and 1,386 special districts in Florida.

Special districts provide a variety of governmental services pertaining to airports; the arts; beach restoration; children's services; community development; conservation; emergency medical services; environmental protection; expressways and bridges; fire control and rescue; health care; housing; juvenile welfare; libraries; mosquito control; navigation; neighborhood improvement; ports; recreation and parks; soil and water conservation; transportation; water control and supply; and water and sewer services.

LAST ACTION: 3/6/06 SENATE Favorable by Community Affairs

.....
They're Back! Church Bulletin Bloopers!

Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.

WHAT ABOUT

Medicaid? . . . Medicaid reform is arguably one of the most significant health and human service issues the Legislature has ever tackled. On December 16, 2005 Governor Bush signed into law a far reaching overhaul of Florida's Medicaid system. It is likely, given the amount of time and effort put into passage of the bill during the winter special session, that the Legislature will not do too much in the Medicaid arena. Turning Medicaid services over to managed care for about 40,000 seniors in an eight county area in the Panhandle and central Florida, vision and hearing coverage, funding and fraud will be the big issues to be addressed this session.

VPK? . . . Or UPK or VUPK...The Legislature has little appetite for opening up the pre-k law passed during its December 2004 special session. Although funding and quality remain concerns, it will take another year of experience - and more - for the Legislature to be willing to substantively address these issues. There appears to be little momentum for addressing the 300 hour summer program, the length of which is logistically challenging for school districts. Perhaps the biggest issue we will address in the school readiness arena is the horrible situation relating to funding for before-and- after school care for students in the state.

KidCare? . . . Restoring outreach funding will be key, as enrollment in KidCare has fallen by 71,000 since late 2003.

2-1-1? . . . Efforts to secure a \$5 million appropriation to support statewide implementation of the Florida 2-1-1 Network Business Plan are moving full steam ahead. On the one hand, \$5 million is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$70+ billion proposed budget. On the other hand, it's \$5 million dollars that many other groups have also targeted.

Next week your Legislative Link will begin reporting on these and other key issues being considered by the 2005 Legislature, including an overview of the Governor's proposed 2006-2007 budget.

These are REAL notes written by PARENTS in a Tennessee school district. (Spellings have been left intact.)

My son is under a doctor's care and should not take PE today. Please execute him.

Please exkuce Lisa for being absent she was sick and I had her shot.

Dear school: Please ecsc's John being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31,32, and also 33.

OVERVIEW OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has conducted an analysis of Administration budget materials, including an OMB computer run that was released inadvertently and that contains proposed funding levels by discretionary program for each of the next five years. The Center's new analysis examines how the budget would affect a range of specific domestic programs, including programs the President previously has described as high priority.

The new report also includes a state-by-state analysis of the impact of proposed budget reductions in specific programs.

Programs that the new analysis covers include, among others:

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant
- Food safety inspection
- Special education and related services to children with disabilities, and several other education programs

Overview of President Bush's Proposed Budget Cuts continued

- Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program
- Low-income homes energy assistance
- EPA grants to states

PROGRAM CUTS IN THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET:

Cuts Grow Deeper Over Time and Will Hit States Hard by Stacy Dean, James Horney, Sharon Parrott, and Arloc Sherman

<http://www.cbpp.org/2-23-06bud.htm> (summary)

<http://www.cbpp.org/2-23-06bud.pdf> 36pp. (full report with program cuts by state)

(Thanks to AARP for this info.)

SNAPSHOT OF THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

Florida Legislators earn \$30,000 annually for their part time work with the Legislature. Because the “part time” nature of their work is much closer to full time work for many of them, it is difficult for anyone who is not wealthy to participate.

According to a New York Times Regional Newspaper Group review of the 160 financial disclosure forms filed this year by state Legislators, many lawmakers are at the upper end of the economic spectrum:

- More than 40 percent of the Legislature, 60 of its 160 members, are millionaires with a declared net worth of more than \$1 million.
- The average income of a lawmaker last year was about \$187,000, compared with \$38,276 for the entire state.
- More than 20 percent of the Legislature, 35 out of 160, are lawyers. About 12 percent own a business. An additional 11 percent claim "consultant" as their primary profession.
- While nearly one-in-four Floridians work in the retail or hospitality industries, no lawmaker lists either field as their primary occupation.
- At least 27 lawmakers own a home in Tallahassee, in addition to their residence in other parts of the state.
- While the state's population is 65 percent white, 17 percent Hispanic and 15 percent black, the Legislature is 75 percent white, 10 percent Hispanic and 15 percent black.
- Women make up a little more than 51 percent of the state, but less than 25 percent of the Legislature. (Source: Lakeland Ledger, 9/12/2005)
- When 34 year old State Rep. Marco Rubio takes his seat as Speaker of the House in November, he will become the first Cuban American in state history attain that position

They're Back! Church Bulletin Bloopers:

- *The Rector will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing: "Break Forth Into Joy."*
- *Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.*

UNITED WAY OF FLORIDA

2006 ISSUE PAPERS

FLORIDA STATE EMPLOYEES' CHARITABLE CAMPAIGN

State government supporting its employees.

Background:

In 1993, the Florida State Employees' Campaign was placed into section 110.181, Florida Statutes, and renamed the Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign (FSECC). Pursuant to that law, the Florida Department of Management Services (DMS) provides staff support to the FSECC Steering Committee, which is comprised of state employees and charged with overseeing the Campaign. This support includes reviewing campaign brochures and pledge cards, enforcing eligibility requirements, reviewing and recommending agencies for acceptance or rejection, ensuring participants are properly registered with appropriate state agencies, etc.

Before 1993, DMS funded this staff position. The 1993 statute, however, requires that if the Legislature does not fund the position, DMS must be reimbursed for it out of gross FSECC contributions, not to exceed two percent (about \$20,000) of the total campaign. From 1993-1997, DMS was reimbursed by FSECC fiscal agents about \$17,000 annually. Every year since 1993-1994 – except 2003-2004 - the Legislature has annually appropriated \$17,000 to fund the position, thereby negating the need to pay for it with state employees FSECC contributions FSECC funds. The 2003 Legislature failed to appropriate funding for the position, so state employees ended up footing the bill.

State employee contributions to the FSECC are intended to be used for charitable purposes, to help people in need. Instead, \$17,000 of those contributions are being used to offset the state's cost for conducting the campaign - a cost that thousands of other large public and private employers absorb as a cost of supporting their employees and being good corporate citizens. This reduces the amount of money available to help people in need, and is contrary to the intent of state employees who contribute to the campaign.

For this minimal investment of \$17,000, the state yields more than \$4 million through the FSECC, reducing the need for at least that amount of state funding for hundreds of individual and family support services.

Because of the critical need for experienced staff, and recognizing the positive message state funding for the DMS staff position would be to state employees, the FSECC Steering Committee has voted to support this request for funding.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to appropriate funds to provide staff support through the Department of Management Services for the Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign.

DORMITORY: When you rearrange the letters: DIRTY ROOM
EVANGELIST: When you rearrange the letters: EVIL'S AGENT
PRESBYTERIAN: When you rearrange the letters: BEST IN PRAYER

FLORIDA STATE EMPLOYEES' CHARITABLE CAMPAIGN

State employees generously supporting their communities.

Background:

In 1993, the Florida State Employees' Campaign (FSECC) was placed into law (s. 110.181, F.S.). It clearly expresses the Legislature's intent that the FSECC be directed by the people for whom it is named and established – state employees themselves: It creates a nine member FSECC Steering Committee of state employees at the state level to oversee the Campaign, and requires local steering committees of state employees “to assist in conducting the campaign and to direct the distribution of undesignated funds.”

“Undesignated funds” are donations that are not directed by the donor to go to a specific charity. FSECC pledge cards tell donors that their undesignated contributions will be allocated by their local state employee steering committees. The fiscal agent must provide all participating organizations and federations a two-week notice of any meeting at which the local steering committee considers undesignated funds.

A federation is an umbrella organization representing more than one charity participating in the FSECC. Federations act merely as “pass throughs” for funds contributed to the charities in their networks, and often represent charities that provide minimal, if any, direct services within a given Florida community. They believe undesignated funds should be allocated by a statutory formula rather than by the local state employee steering committees.

This belief is contrary to express Legislative intent and would eliminate the most meaningful tool state

employees have in operating and directing their campaign.

Creating an arbitrary, state-mandated formula to distribute undesignated funds discounts the tremendous leadership state employees bring to their campaign, ignores their ability to represent their colleagues by distributing the funds in ways that best accommodate the needs of their communities, and removes from their control one of their best tools for assuring that their colleagues' contributions have the most impact in their communities, where they live and work. It also assumes that a predetermined formula better reflects where donors would like their undesignated funds to go. In fact, the opposite is true. Since most local state employee campaign committees have historically allocated undesignated funds to United Way, the fact that state employees continue to make undesignated contributions indicates they fully support the actions of their peers on the local committees.

The FSECC was not created for the convenience of charities and federations, but rather for state employees and to lessen workplace disruption. To apply a formula to undesignated funds presumes that employees who choose not to designate don't know what they are doing and can't read the pledge card.

The United Way of Florida opposes limiting state employee oversight and control of the Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign by, among others, changing the way undesignated funds are allocated.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to maintain existing FSECC Law.

UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION

Florida's new Universal Prekindergarten program must be a quality one.

Background:

In November 2002, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the Florida Constitution requiring implementation of a high quality Voluntary Prekindergarten program (VPK) by the 2005 school year for all four year olds whose parents want them to participate. During a special session in December 2004, the Legislature passed legislation requiring implementation of the new VPK program in August 2005. A month after the 2005 school year began, 96,804 four year olds were attending VPK classes being offered by 4,106 public and private providers across the state.

Following the referendum, the 2003 Legislature created the Universal Prekindergarten Council to make recommendations regarding VPK program implementation.

The Council's recommendations fully embrace the concept of a high quality UPK program, addressing accountability, assessment, community partnership, costs/resources, service delivery design and parental involvement, including curriculum, child and program outcomes, programmatic requirements, coordination with existing programs, best practices, and cost estimates.

Key among the Council's recommendations are that the new VPK program: (1) recognize the uniqueness of each child; (2) emphasize oral language skills; (3) include ongoing assessments used to inform instruction; (4) require each program/provider to establish referral processes for children who need support; (5) embrace strong parental involvement; (6) require age-appropriate, literacy-focused, individually-directed, and research-based curriculum that instills a love of learning in each child; (7) have maximum class size of 20 children, with a minimum of five per class; (8) include minimum staffing of one teacher per 10 children, with a second person required for 11-20 children; (9) require at least two staff for every 20 children (must have a minimum of a national CDA credential or Florida equivalent); (10) institute ongoing staff development combined with multi-level reimbursement and career ladder opportunities; (11) contain a five-year target of at least one staff member in each UPK class with an associates degree and, after eight years, at least one staff member in each class with a BA degree; (12) require a school year of 1080 hours with 720 contact hours; (13) place all School Readiness programs and VPK in the Department of Education under a Chancellor of Early Education; and (14) maintain modified local school readiness coalitions to administer the programs locally.

The new VPK program does not include the underlined recommendations of the Council, above.

The UPK Council recommendations are wholly consistent with the United Way of Florida's long-standing philosophy and approach to early care and education.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to adopt the recommendations of the Universal Prekindergarten Council.

THESE ARE REAL NOTES WRITTEN BY PARENTS IN A TENNESSEE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

(SPELLINGS HAVE BEEN LEFT INTACT.)

PLEASE EXCUSE GLORIA FROM JIM TODAY. SHE IS ADMINISTRATING.

PLEASE EXCUSE ROLAND FROM P.E. FOR A FEW DAYS. YESTERDAY HE FELL OUTOF A TREE AND MISPLACED HIS HIP.

FLORIDA 2-1-1 NETWORK

The state should play its indispensable role in this public/private partnership.

Background:

On July 21, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated the telephone number “2-1-1” as the abbreviated dialing code for access to community Information and Referral (I&R) services nationwide. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognized number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families in need and community-based organizations and governmental agencies that can help them. “2-1-1” is the 911 telephone number for non-emergency human services and for crisis response information.

The 2002 Florida Legislature passed visionary legislation creating the Health and Human Service Access Act, recognizing 2-1-1 as an invaluable “front door” for simplifying and streamlining access to human service information, and charging the Agency for Health Care Administration with certifying 2-1-1 providers to assure quality and uniformity.

2-1-1 is available in 40 counties, representing 79.3% of Florida’s population (14,177,900 people).

2006 Legislative Issue:

Florida Information and Referral (I&R) providers – who answer three million telephone inquiries about human services annually – have compiled information on thousands of human service programs across the state. Along with the 2-1-1 providers that link them together, they are making it easier for all Floridians to get the information they need to keep them out of emergency rooms, off of government assistance, out of “deep end” social service programs, safe from abuse, and in stable housing. They also help callers find job training and assistance, elder care and child care, and before-and-after-school care that will allow them to stay employed. During the 2004 hurricanes, 2-1-1s provided critically needed support to many Emergency Operation Centers, and provided information to more than 100,000 Floridians in the days following the storms; a role that will be just as important during recovery efforts over the next few years.

Based on a study by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Florida’s state agencies annually spend more than \$20 million, and state employees expend more than 1,000,000 hours providing I&R services. Yet, there is no I&R “system”; virtually all of these autonomous I&Rs act in isolation from one another, with no way to share information or act in a coordinated manner that will result in more efficient and effective expenditure of state resources. Implementation of a Florida 211 Network will ensure that a comprehensive, quality, efficient, and effective 211 “system” will be created in Florida. The alternative is a fragmented, inefficient “non-system” that fails to maximize use of tax dollars, and does not effectively help people to help themselves and help others.

In this era of government accountability, public-private partnerships, maximizing use of technology to reduce governmental costs, and reliance on individuals to be self-sufficient, state funding for implementation of the Florida 211 Network is a true winner.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to appropriate \$5 million to fund the Florida 2-1-1 Network.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FLORIDA MEDICAID REFORM

Coalition for Responsible Health Care Reform.

Medicaid is a key health care safety net program for Florida's families. It provides vital health care services to nearly 2.2 million children, pregnant woman, seniors, and people with severe disabilities. The Florida Medicaid program also helps strengthen our state's economy. State Medicaid matching dollars support 174,000 jobs, \$6.5 billion in wages and \$16.8 billion in business activity for FY 2005.1

The 2005 Florida Legislature passed legislation authorizing the Agency for Health Care Administration to seek a federal waiver authorizing the State to conduct two Medicaid reform pilot projects, one in Duval County and one in Broward County. As the waiver process proceeds and the Legislature evaluate the pilot projects, it is imperative that the following principles be followed:

Medicaid reform should be done in the sunshine.

Changes to the Medicaid program affect the life and health of millions of Medicaid consumers and their families. A meaningful public process allowing for public review and comment on Medicaid reform proposals is essential to laying the groundwork for successful reform.

Maintain the guarantee of Medicaid coverage for consumers.

Today, Floridians who qualify for Medicaid and who need health care coverage receive it, regardless of where they live or when they apply for coverage. They can rely on the program to provide medically necessary services when they need them. Medicaid reform should maintain this important commitment.

Ensure Medicaid consumers' access to quality health care services and choice of providers.

People who rely on Medicaid have very low incomes and many have intensive needs for services due to special needs (developmental, physical, medical, mental, emotional, and behavioral). Therefore, the coverage consumers get through Medicaid must ensure that their wide-ranging vital health care needs are met. Further, inadequate access to and choice of Medicaid providers is a significant problem in many parts of the state. Medicaid reform must include initiatives such as rate adjustments to attract more Medicaid providers, particularly in rural communities. Moreover, Medicaid reform initiatives must focus on improving the quality of health care services provided to Medicaid consumers. This should include data compilation and publication to document improved outcomes, particularly for historically under served populations such as racial and ethnic minorities.

Maintain the open-ended federal commitment to sharing the cost of Medicaid.

Every dollar (\$1) that the state of Florida spends on Medicaid services draws down \$1.43 in federal funding. This federal match system gives Florida the flexibility to respond to downturns in the economy, increases in the number of uninsured, or public health or other emergencies that occur, knowing we will not shoulder those expenses on our own. Florida should not agree to any plan that weakens this federal-state partnership.

The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to support the Guiding Principles for Florida Medicaid Reform developed by the Coalition for Responsible Health Care Reform.

Reasons why the English language is so hard to learn:

- *A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.*
- *Quicksand works slowly, boxing rings are square, and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?*

SPECIAL NEEDS SHELTERS

Background:

A significant number of Florida's citizens are considered vulnerable in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes. For example:

- More than 76% of Florida's total population (12,816,041 persons) resides in the 35 coastal counties.
- Eight percent of the state's total population (1,333,969 persons) resides in mobile homes.
- More than 18% of the state's total population (3,051,453 persons) is 65 years of age or older, with the highest number in Miami-Dade (314,497), Palm Beach (278,868), Broward (315,470), Pinellas (229,763) and Hillsborough (139,341) counties.
- Florida has made significant strides in reducing the deficit of safe hurricane shelter space in the past five years. Approximately 50% of the deficit has been eliminated. However, between and 2009, the vulnerable population in Florida is projected to increase by nearly 900,000, with as many as 16% possibly seeking safety in public shelters.
- There are 746 nursing homes with 81,986 licensed beds in the state.
- There are an estimated 333,492 citizens that may be considered "frail elderly" (about 2% of the Florida's population).

The challenges of the four hurricanes that struck Florida during the 2004 hurricane season provided the opportunity to identify needed improvements related to disaster services, especially regarding special needs shelter operations related to health care services. Examples of problems the state experienced include:

- An unexpectedly large demand for special needs shelter services.
- A lack of placements for persons with special needs whose homes or facilities were uninhabitable after the disasters.
- An inadequate number of caregivers and medical personnel at special need shelters.

2006 Legislative Issue:

The Florida Legislature should address pre- and post-disaster planning to enhance the safety and well-being of persons with special needs before, during, and after disasters. Lead responsibility for certain functions should be delegated to specific state agencies and a multiagency emergency special needs shelter response team should be established to assist local areas impacted by natural or manmade disasters that require the use of special needs shelters. Pre and post disaster facility use and licensure flexibility should also be authorized so that, for example, hospitals and nursing homes should be allowed to request reimbursement for sheltering persons with special needs. In addition, the Department of Health should be directed to adopt rules regarding minimum standards for special needs shelters; "special needs shelter" and "special needs client" should be defined; and the Department of Community Affairs should be directed to include information about special needs shelter needs in its biennial statewide emergency shelter plan.

***The United Way of Florida urges the 2006 Florida Legislature to pass
Legislation intended to protect the safety and well being of individuals in special
needs shelters.***



United Way of Florida

UNITED WAY OF FLORIDA, INC.

**307 East Seventh Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32303
Phone - (850) 488-8287
Fax – (850) 681-9137**

Theodore G. Granger
President & Editor

Beth Sykes
Chief Operating Officer

Julia Cunningham
Office Manager

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.