

State Rep. Michael Bileca
1000 57th Avenue, Suite 202
West Miami, FL 33144-5120
(305) 442-6868

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State Representative Michael Bileca

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for allowing me to serve in the Florida House of Representatives. As always, I consider it a great honor to represent you in the Legislature, especially during these tough economic times.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you about the significant policy changes that were made during the 2012 Legislative Session, which just concluded in Tallahassee. After a couple of months in the Capital City, it is good to be back home with the people I care about and serve.

I proudly sponsored several bills and fought to protect your interests in the Legislature. I was pleased to serve on several House committees, including the PreK-12 Appropriations Committee, Health Care Appropriations Committee, and the Education Committee.

As anticipated, this year the state faced significant challenges due to a \$1.8 billion budget shortfall. With determination and perseverance, however, the Legislature fulfilled our constitutional obligation and created a balanced budget. We accomplished this goal by refusing to raise taxes on our economically burdened citizenry. I worked with my colleagues to make certain our budget prioritized people over programs to ensure the safety and security of future generations of Floridians.

Our top priority was getting Floridians back to work by creating a healthy business environment for our communities. I worked hard to keep my campaign promises to the voters by forcing government to live within its means, keeping taxes low, and focusing on job creation.

I hope you find this legislative update to be a useful source of information on the 2012 Legislative Session. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues, please call my office at 305-442-6868, or send me an email at michael.bileca@myfloridahouse.gov. And as always, if there is anything that I can do to assist you, feel welcome to contact my office.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you.

Sincerely,

Michael Bileca
District 117

Education

Since 2001, there has been an across-the-board positive trend in student performance in Florida. More of Florida's students are mastering the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed in school and beyond. I believe that if given the tools, Florida's students will continue to meet the high academic bar set before them.

This year the legislature further expressed their commitment to quality education by increasing PreK-12 funding by over a billion dollars.

The Legislature passed significant reforms to the area of higher education. HB 7129, State Universities of Academic and Research Excellence and National Preeminence creates standards and benchmarks for institutions to meet and if met gives them greater flexibility in areas of tuition and course requirements. This flexibility will allow the institutions to offer more competitive programs and put them on a path towards greater excellence.



This year the Legislature also passed several pieces of legislation that increased efficiencies and effectiveness in the areas of early learning and the VPK program. Furthermore, HB 7127, School Improvement and Education Accountability recognizes the federal waiver Florida received for the differentiated accountability system, and makes improvements to identify and rehabilitate low-performing schools.

As the Legislature continues on a path of educational opportunities, accountability, and high academic expectations, we will keep Florida's students on a path to future success.

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State House District 117 Contact Information

Capitol Office:

1003 The Capitol
402 South Monroe St
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
(850) 488-6506

District Office:

1000 57th Avenue, Suite 202
West Miami, FL 33144-5120
(305) 442-6868

Legislative Assistants:

Alex Garcia
Judith Ruiz

Committee Membership

K-20 Competitiveness Subcommittee (Vice-Chair)
Education Committee
Health & Human Services Access Subcommittee
Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee
PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee

Parent Empowerment Act - HB 1191: Parent Empowerment allows parents of students at chronically failing schools to submit a petition to their school district requesting implementation of a school turn around option selected by the parents. It would require the school district, upon request, to provide parents with the their child's teacher's performance evaluation. The intention of the bill, if enacted in to law, will accomplish a few things highlighted below:

- No child will be taught by an ineffective teacher two years in a row.
- Parents will be notified if their child is being taught by an out-of-field teacher and provide them with an option for virtual instruction by an in-field teacher with a rating of effective or better.
- Parents will also be notified if their child is being taught by a chronically low-performing teacher.
- Parents at a chronically failing school will be able to organize and petition the school board to choose an intervention option, giving them an effective tool in transforming that failing school.

The purpose of this bill is to help facilitate information and empowerment to ALL parents.

American Founders' Month Act (HB 689): This bill will designate the month of September as the "American Founders' Month".

This legislation will allow teachers to integrate in to their curriculum an extra focus on the founders, founding documents and circumstances surrounding the founding of our nation.



Divestiture of Government Contracts with Cuba & Syria Act (HB 959): This bill prohibits local municipalities and government agencies from contracting with companies that have business operations with the Cuban or Syrian governments. In the bid application process of any government project, companies must submit an affidavit stating they do not engage in business dealings with Cuba or Syria.

International Law Contracts (HB 917): This bill encourages international businesses to choose Florida as a jurisdiction destination to settle disputes.

The most difficult decisions demanded from the Legislature are the choices we must make about how to meet critical needs of Florida's most vulnerable while managing limited resources. Amidst challenging economies, the Legislature has chosen to reduce the state budget every year since 2007 to protect the hard-earned dollars of Florida's families and maintain our constitutional requirement for a balanced budget; and this year proved no different as we faced a \$1 billion shortfall.

The Florida House remains committed to maintaining programs that provide health care and social services to Florida's most vulnerable citizens. Even though we faced a significant budget shortfall, were able to provide additional funding for increased Medicaid caseloads and did not reduce or eliminate any category of Medicaid eligibility. In addition, funding was provided for additional elder

waiver slots in the nursing home diversion, PACE, the Aged and Disabled Waiver, and the Community Care for the Elderly Waiver programs.

The Legislature passed an agency reform bill for the Department of Health. The reorganization bill eliminates duplicative requirements, reduces inefficiencies and provides a cost savings to the state. In addition, changes were made to adoption laws to make it easier for abused and neglected children to gain permanent, loving families.

Improved patient care for seniors remains a priority. Legislation was passed that removes duplicative certification and reporting requirements of nursing homes, allowing care providers to spend more time tending to the needs of patients rather than on paperwork.

Last year, the statewide Medicaid reform initiative was signed into law and this year we focused

on implementing the program. A Medicaid waiver package was submitted to the federal government in August 2011. After federal approval, the Medicaid reform initiative will be fully implemented.

This program will provide Medicaid participants with improved, patient-centered care and greater access to specialists, and hopefully result in more predictable costs and a slower rate of cost growth for the program.

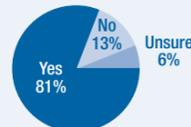
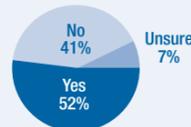
Lastly, the Legislature remains mindful of the importance of supporting advances in cancer research. This year, we committed \$25 million towards biomedical research and services at cancer centers throughout the state.



2012 Survey Results

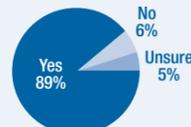
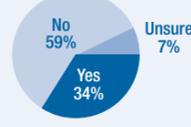
EDUCATION

1. Do you think less money should be spent on the educational system in years when there are fewer students attending?
2. Should Florida expand career-education opportunities for high school students who are not college-bound?



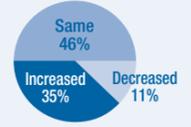
BUDGET

3. Would you be in favor of directly taxing products purchased over the Internet?
4. Would you be in favor of a limit on the amount that state spending could increase each year?



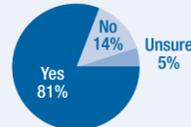
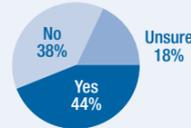
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

5. Over the past year, do you think that crime in your community has increased, decreased or stayed the same?



HEALTH CARE

6. Should foster children be given financial assistance to care for themselves as they transition out of the foster care system, even after they turn 18?
7. Would you support an effort to allow Floridians to opt-out of any federal health care measures that are mandated by the federal government?



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

8. Do you support the use of taxpayer dollars through grants or tax incentives to entice new businesses to move to our state?



GAMING

9. Do you believe Florida should relax its gaming regulations to provide greater opportunities to expand gambling in the state?



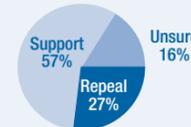
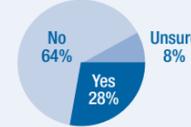
ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

10. In an effort to reduce greenhouse gases, would you be willing to have Florida let utility companies build more nuclear power plants to help meet the demand for more energy usage?



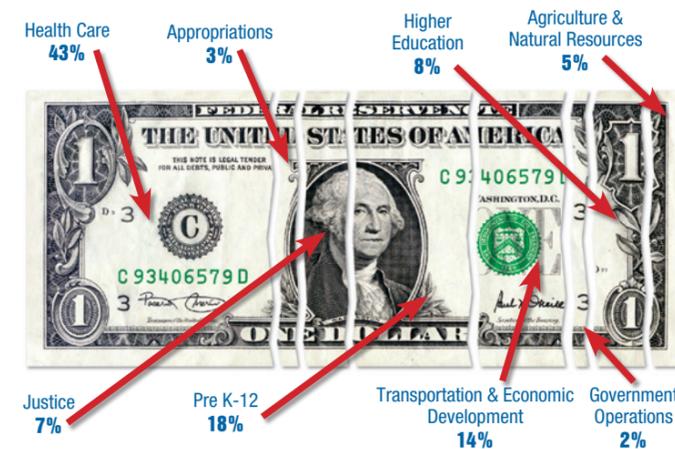
INSURANCE

11. Do you believe your insurance company has treated you fairly regarding rates, claim resolution and coverage options?
12. Do you support measures to combat fraud and to address other cost drivers in Personal Injury Protection (PIP) automobile insurance or do you favor repeal of PIP?



Thanks to all of you who responded to my pre-session issues survey in January 2012. While this is a non-scientific survey comprised of the responses of constituents who chose to respond, I wanted to share the overall results with you.

State Budget 2012-2013



Agriculture & Natural Resources:	\$3.2 billion
Appropriations	\$2.2 billion
Pre K-12:	\$12.8 billion
Government Operations:	\$1.8 billion
Health Care:	\$29.9 billion
Higher Education:	\$5.8 billion
Justice:	\$4.6 billion
Transportation & Economic Development:	\$9.7 billion

The 2012 Legislative Session focused first and foremost on facing the challenges posed by yet another budget shortfall and an uncertain economic outlook. The Florida Constitution requires a balanced budget and, unlike the U.S. Congress, the Florida Legislature cannot spend money that we do not have. As stewards of Florida's tax dollars, we were forced to make difficult choices and set spending priorities with our state's limited dollars.

I believe this year the Legislature met our constitutional responsibility by passing a responsibly balanced budget. We did this just like Florida's families and small businesses handle their finances in tough circumstances - by tightening our belts and making tough decisions that are in what I believe to be the long-term best interests of our state's financial future.

Limited state dollars forced us to prioritize spending and focus on what was most important, just like Florida's families and business do with their resources. This meant focusing on the core missions of government - keeping our families safe, and providing critical health care for the most vulnerable among us. The Legislature crafted and passed a budget that will provide our children the opportunities for a world class education by including a \$1.1 billion increase

in education funding. The increase in education funding will ensure that our students are receiving the instruction, materials, and support needed to thrive in the 21st Century world.

In an effort to keep taxes low, the Legislature voted to streamline programs and make many cuts to reduce spending. We made tough sacrifices to account for the budget shortfall so we do not pass along the burden to future legislatures. It is my belief that Florida must maintain sufficient reserves to weather altered fiscal forecasts and preserve our bond ratings. When crafting the budget, each legislature needs to have a perspective not only of the current fiscal year, but also of future possibilities. Our state has benefitted from the existence of reserves in the past and must make the responsible decision to maintain them for future contingencies.

We passed a budget that was balanced and did not raise taxes; therefore, I believe our responsible decisions today should save Floridians billions of dollars over the next few years and place Florida in the best position possible for economic growth once the economy recovers.