

2020 Florida Legislative Session: FPSC Takeaways

Florida's 2020 Legislative Session ended on March 13, and Governor Ron DeSantis had until June 30 to sign bills into law. The FPSC's Legislative Affairs team monitored key bills, as well as the State of Florida's Budget for the next fiscal year, which was signed by the Governor on June 29. Below are FPSC Legislative takeaways.

BILLS

Senate Bill 7018, which requires the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to develop a master plan for electric vehicle charging infrastructure by July 1, 2021, passed both the House and the Senate and was approved by the Governor on June 9. The bill would require FDOT to develop a plan for charging infrastructure in consultation with the FPSC and the Office of Energy within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The bill also requires FDOT to submit a progress report on the plan to the Governor and both Legislative Chambers by December 1, 2020.

House Bill 1095, commonly referred to as the "8-1-1, Call Before You Dig" bill, has multiple provisions relating to criminal and non-criminal violations when a natural gas line is struck and was signed by the Governor on June 29. Fines gathered by all reported violations and enforcement of non-criminal infractions committed by an excavator or member operator, have been redirected to the State Fire Marshall, as the main enforcement entity. Additionally, the bill outlines the direction of specific civil fines to fund damage prevention education resources to local and state firefighters, with State Fire Marshall oversight. The bill also includes a 12-year term limit for the Office of Public Counsel.

BUDGET

The signed budget totaled \$92.2 billion, after Governor DeSantis vetoed over \$1 billion in projects. Florida's reserves total \$6.3 billion, more than 6 percent of the total budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. The overall budget includes teacher pay raises, a 3 percent raise for state employees, as well as funding to address COVID-19 effects. In an effort to reduce Floridians' tax burden, the budget also includes tax relief efforts totaling up to \$352.2 million and includes a 3-day Back-to-School sales tax holiday, a 7-day disaster preparedness sales tax holiday, as well as property tax relief of \$304.8 million.

The Florida PSC budget was fully funded at \$25,931,875, including the requested \$121,649 for acquisition of new vehicles, per the agency's Legislative Budget Request, and was solidified by Governor DeSantis on June 29, 2020.

The FPSC Legislative Affairs team is gearing up for the 2021 Legislative Session and will continue to participate and monitor any and all legislative actions affecting the FPSC and Florida.