

# GRay Matters



*It's not always black and white.*

## 2020 Session: Week 3

2/3/20

The House and the Senate released their proposed budgets this week, and each sticks close to the \$91.4 billion plan laid out by Governor **Ron DeSantis** in October. But there are some key differences.

The House plan is a hair below the Governor's at \$91.3 billion, with its allocations to teacher raises and the Florida Forever land acquisition program being the largest departures. The House set aside \$500 million to increase teacher pay and \$20 million for Florida Forever. DeSantis asked for \$600 million and \$100 million, respectively.

A notable, but expected, omission in the House budget: VISIT FLORIDA. The tourism marketing agency will close at the end of the fiscal year unless lawmakers renew its authorization.

The Senate plan came in at \$92.8 billion, and it also set aside \$500 million for teacher pay as well as another pay raise plan absent from the gubernatorial and House budgets — a 3 percent across-the-board raise for state employees.

### The Florida House of Representatives



Speaker-designate **Chris Sprowls'** bill to block life insurers from using DNA information to make policy decisions passed the full House with a 117-1 vote. The measure hasn't kept the same pace in the Senate, though it was approved by its first committee on Tuesday.

### Florida Senate

A bill to eliminate the controversial “Best and Brightest” teacher bonus program and redirect the cash toward pay raises cleared the Senate Appropriations Committee with a unanimous vote and is now headed to the chamber floor.



## Bill of the Week

A bill introduced by the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability committee this week would bring some new changes to the state employee health insurance program while striking down some old ones.

[Senate Bill 7046](#) would require the state to create nine regions for HMO procurements issued January 1, 2023 or after. Each region would consist of several counties and the bill would mandate that at least one HMO be made available in each.

The plan would also prevent some major alterations greenlit by past Legislatures from taking effect, most notably the tiered health care plan structure approved in the 2017 Legislative Session.

That requirement — which has been delayed — allowed state workers to choose their health insurance from a set ranging from lower-cost, higher deductible “bronze” plans to higher-cost, lower-deductible “platinum” plans.

The change was aimed at saving the state money, but after running the math, experts said the lower-cost plans could sway thousands of state employees who currently opt out of state health insurance to pick up inexpensive coverage.

Another clarification in the legislation relates to the role of pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs. Under SB 7046, PBMs couldn’t exercise any judgement over whether a prescription is medically necessary — that call would be left in the hands of the prescribing physician.

## Federal Spotlight

GrayRobinson's Washington, DC office releases a newsletter each week entitled **The Golden Apple**, reporting on the "latest discord on Capitol Hill." This week's newsletter discusses the growing trend of cashless storefronts.

While consumers have quickly adopted mobile payment technology, the US economy is a long way from being cashless, [witnesses told the House Financial Services Task Force on Financial Technology](#) on Thursday. Members discussed the growing trend of cashless storefronts as they heard testimony to support consideration of [H.R. 2650](#), which would prohibit retail businesses from refusing cash payments. More than 80 percent of American adults have smartphones, and PayPal's Head of Global Public Policy, Usman Ahmed, described exponential growth in the use of smartphones for payments, via both PayPal and Venmo. Research shows, however, that cash is still the medium of choice for transactions less than \$25, and is particularly popular with people under 30 and over 60. Regions of the country without good access to broadband don't benefit from digital payments, and time lags in the payment system remain a challenge, especially for low-income consumers. Witnesses urged Congress to act to speed up the payments system, streamline the legal framework for payments, and enact strong privacy protections for users of mobile payment services.

Read **The Golden Apple** in its entirety [here](#).

## Client Spotlight



### **Florida Brownfields Association** **Melissa Pearce Schick, President-Elect**

**My role at the Florida Brownfields Association (FBA) entails:** The Environmental Protection Agency awards millions of dollars each year through grant funding to help municipalities, communities, and non-profit organizations with redevelopment via environmental assessments, remediation, and cleanup planning. The FBA provides opportunities and education for anyone throughout the entire state of Florida and works in partnership with the EPA, other organizations, and non-profits to help further the brownfields program. A brownfield property is a site that can have either real or perceived contamination, and is a barrier to redevelopment. My role with the FBA involves helping to further advance the education and awareness of brownfields, and the benefits and opportunities that are available through the program.

**The Florida Brownfields Association can help you:** The FBA assists communities and community stakeholders in acquiring the benefits that the U.S. EPA's Brownfields program can offer toward redevelopment efforts, truly transforming entire communities into healthier and thriving neighborhoods.

**Something you wish people knew about your job or the Florida Brownfields Association that might not be obvious:** Often, people do not realize that a potential brownfield site may not have any actual contamination at all, but the perception is what tends to deter people from choosing a site for redevelopment. Potential brownfield sites may include a former gas station, auto repair facility, or a dry cleaner.

**What excites you about going to work each day:** I truly enjoy being able to assist communities with gaining knowledge about how the EPA brownfields program can benefit their own community, and the citizens who make up the heart and soul. Seeing how brownfields redevelopment can truly revolutionize an entire community, bringing it from blight and abandonment to a flourishing, healthy environment is what motivates me every single day.

## Looking Ahead

Now that the House and Senate have released their budgets, the chambers will start working to bridge the \$1.5 billion gap between them.

The week begins with a meeting of the House Ways & Means Committee at noon Monday, where a bill that would repeal a pro sports stadium funding program is on the agenda.

Monday also sees a number of gubernatorial appointments go before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Ethics and Elections Committee. The Senate is also scheduled for a floor session on Tuesday.

## The GrayRobinson Team

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\* Denotes non-attorney professional



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