

GRay Matters



It's not always black and white.

2020 Session: Week 7

3/2/20

The week started with an explosive hearing in the ongoing investigation into the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV).

The House Public Integrity & Ethics Committee meeting, which spanned most of Monday, revealed some new information regarding the organization's alleged misuse of taxpayer funds, including paying its former CEO more than \$7 million over three years.

As investigations continue, the state has gone forward with severing its contract with FCADV. The House passed a bill ending the contract last week and the Senate followed on Wednesday. Governor **Ron DeSantis** signed off Thursday.

FCADV may have dominated headlines out of the Capitol for the first half of the week, but coronavirus took center stage to close it out.

DeSantis on Thursday stated there were no confirmed cases in Florida, but the state is holding back on sharing hard data. Surgeon General **Scott Rivkees** says the state can only share information on "highly infectious" viruses, and coronavirus doesn't qualify.

Democratic lawmakers may try to force the state to provide some answers next week by way of an amendment to Department of Health-related legislation.

The Florida House of Representatives



— The Higher Appropriations Committee advanced a plan to merge New College and Florida Polytechnic University into the University of Florida. It's now ready for a vote by the full House. Though there is no companion bill, Senate President **Bill Galvano** has expressed support for the plan.

— A bill that would require public and private employers to use the federal E-Verify system to check employees' immigration status had its debut committee hearing, clearing the Commerce Committee with a party-line vote. E-Verify is one of DeSantis' top priorities.

Florida Senate

— The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill that aimed at reforming the Department of Children and Families. A priority of Senate President-designate **Wilton Simpson**, the “DCF Accountability Act” would create an Office of Quality Assurance and Improvement within the department as well as create a Chief Quality Officer position, among other changes.

— A bill by Senator **Lauren Book** that would require public schools to install panic alarm systems cleared two committee stops this week and it now heads to the chamber floor. The House companion is similarly positioned.



Bill of the Week

When the state legalized medical marijuana, it was removed from the list of banned substances in jails, prisons, and juvenile detention facilities.

This removal was due to the way the Legislature implemented the medical marijuana amendment. Though the state considers cannabis a controlled substance, lawmakers changed its definition to exclude medical marijuana. More recently, hemp was carved out.

House Bill 745, sponsored by Representative **Scott Plakon**, would add them both back and expand the contraband lists to include a couple other items.

Under the bill, it would be a third-degree felony to bring any cannabis product into a correctional facility. That includes hemp products such as CBD oil, which is legal for Floridians to use even without a medical marijuana prescription.

Further, the bill would add vaporizers, also known as e-cigarettes, to the contraband list for each facility type. Violations would be a first-degree misdemeanor, the same as cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Cell phones — which are already outlawed at jails and prisons — would be similarly banned at juvenile facilities. If the violation was intentional, it would result in a first-degree misdemeanor.

The bill cleared its final committee this week, setting it up for a floor vote in the House. A similar bill in the Senate, SB 1286 by Senator **David Simmons**, is also ready for consideration by the full chamber.

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 FDIC reporting a decline in net bank income.

Lower net interest income and higher expenses led to a decline in the banking industry's overall net income in 2019, the [FDIC reported on Tuesday](#). FDIC Chairman **Jelena McWilliams** said the industry remains strong, and the number of “problem banks” declined to 51, the lowest level since 2006. The industry continued to consolidate, with 77 institutions absorbed by mergers in the fourth quarter of 2019 and three banks failing, while only three new banks opened.

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

Client Spotlight



Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
Lindsey Phillips, Director of External Affairs

My role at Devereux Advanced Behavioral Healthcare entails: My role as Director of External Affairs at Devereux Advanced Behavioral Healthcare includes all aspects of external relations, strategic communications, media and government relations, fund development and community engagement while also serving in an operations role providing oversight of the admissions processes statewide for 255 beds of inpatient and group home behavioral healthcare treatment. I have the privilege of facilitating ongoing partnerships among government agencies, community organizations, and civic-minded individuals who share a common goal in supporting individuals with unique needs in our community.

Devereux Advanced Behavioral Healthcare can help you: Devereux offers a broad continuum of services for individuals with mental health challenges and intellectual/developmental disabilities. We can provide support for those in need of our services and we can provide opportunities for those who are passionate about helping others by getting involved in our awareness and advocacy efforts. We also offer a number of educational programs to provide training on topics such as prevention of human trafficking and internet safety for parents and caregivers.

Something you wish people knew about Devereux Advanced Behavioral Healthcare that might not be obvious: Some may not know that Devereux provides therapeutic services to victims of human trafficking. Some may also not know that Florida is ranked 3rd in the nation for reports to the national human trafficking hotline and that the majority of these reports are from central Florida. In 2018, Devereux provided expert clinical care to 133 survivors and their family members and 100% of these cases demonstrated a reduction in trauma symptoms.

What excites you about going to work each day: I could not be more proud of the meaningful work provided by our dedicated team at Devereux each day. I get to see first-hand the positive changes to people's lives through their efforts. I am continuously motivated by the opportunity to facilitate partnerships with individuals and organizations that choose to get involved, and it excites me to see how the collaboration leads to a positive and lasting impact in the community.

Looking Ahead

There are just two weeks left in the 2020 Legislative Session, and most of the time remaining will be dedicated to hammering out the 2020-21 state budget.

The Senate has only three committee meetings scheduled for next week. The Ethics & Elections Committee will meet briefly on Monday to consider some gubernatorial appointments. A marathon meeting of the Rules Committee follows and with more than 50 items on the agenda, it will be the final resting place for many bills.

The Appropriations Committee will have a similarly packed agenda when it meets Tuesday. After that, it's three days of floor sessions.

House State Affairs and Health & Human Services committees will meet Monday to address some final House priorities before the focus turns to floor sessions. These priorities

include legislation regarding reclaimed water (HB 715), the Departments of Health (HB 1143) and child welfare (HB 7063). As well, the Rules Committee will meet Monday through Wednesday this week to set the House's final special order lists (Friday is the last day for Special Order Calendar). The final substantive House committee scheduled is Education, which meets on Tuesday. With the possibility of the gaming compact to be reviewed in the final weeks, there may be additional committees, but none are scheduled as of now. Tuesday marks the 50th day of Session — the final day for regularly scheduled committee meetings.

The GrayRobinson Team

[Doyle Bartlett](#) | [Dean Cannon](#) | [Chris Carmody](#) | [Larry Cretul*](#) | [Chris Dawson](#)
[Katie Flury*](#) | [Charlie Gray](#) | [Keenan Hale*](#) | [Rheb Harbison*](#)
[John Harris*](#) | [Mike Huey](#) | [Ty Jackson](#) | [George Levesque](#) | [Jessica Love*](#)
[Chris McCannell*](#) | [Kim McDougal*](#) | [Greg Mesack*](#) | [Kirk Pepper*](#) | [Joseph Salzberg](#)
[Todd Steibly*](#) | [Robert Stuart*](#) | [Jason Unger](#)

* Denotes non-attorney professional



www.GRLobby.com