



## The LaMarca Letter

### January 2019- Committee Weeks Begin

This week Florida celebrated the inauguration of Governor DeSantis and Lt. Governor Nunez. The ceremonies shared a vision for a bolder Florida. The Florida House looks forward to working with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Florida Senate in continuing our steadfast progress of lowering taxes, creating a favorable regulatory climate, providing the best education for our children, and protecting our unique and precious natural resources. By working together to accomplish these goals, I believe Florida will look forward to an even brighter future.

#### **House Commerce Committee receives positive overview of Florida's Economy**

This week, the Commerce Committee received an overview of Florida's economy from the Office of Economic & Demographic Research.

The presentation highlighted many positives for Florida's economic environment. These highlights include that Florida's gross domestic product, or GDP, has been on the rise with posted growth of 4.0% in 2015, 3.2% in 2016, and 2.2% in 2017, and 4.5% in the second quarter of 2018. GDP is the sum of all goods and services produced over time and is used to indicate the health and size of an economy. Florida's GDP also continues to outpace the national average for economic growth. Florida's unemployment rate has also continued to drop, decreasing to 3.3%, which is lower than the national unemployment rate of 3.7%.

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I believe these statistics show why Florida's total GDP recently hit the \$1 trillion mark. In order to put that achievement in perspective, if Florida were a country it would have the 17<sup>th</sup> ranked economy in the world. In my view, cutting taxes, balancing our budget, and maintaining a strong environment for job creation, will keep Florida on the path of prosperity.

### **Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee Presents on Water Quality Policies**

This week the Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee met to discuss Florida's current environmental policies related to the Springs and Aquifer Protection Act, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and the most recent update on Senate Bill 10 (2017), the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir Project.

For the past several years, the frequency and intensity of harmful algae blooms in Florida have been increasing, especially in central and south Florida. Excess nutrients flowing into the state's water resources have fueled algal bloom. These events have negatively affected coastal estuaries, lakes, creeks, springs, wildlife, economies, health, and tourism. A disruption in Florida's water quality is a disruption in Florida's way of life.

We have been fighting to fix our water quality issues. The Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act was passed in 2016 to add additional measures to protect our Outstanding Florida Springs by addressing the quality and quantity of water in our springs and aquifers. This act created a systematic process for assessing all Outstanding Florida Springs, delineating priority focus areas, identifying pollution sources, and finally adopting basin management action plans for affected areas. Because of this act, 145 projects have been implemented across our state to protect and maintain our natural springs.

Another way we have fought to combat these issues is through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). CERP is an extensive plan, with 67 projects, that aims to restore, protect, and preserve Florida's water resources in central and south Florida. A handful of these projects are planned for completion within the next 5 years. In 2017, Senate Bill 10 expedited the EAA Reservoir Project to store water south of Lake Okeechobee. Once these projects are complete, Florida's water quality will see significant improvement.

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Water quality and environmental issues are critical to sustaining Florida's great way of life. The Florida House is committed to addressing water quality issues and we will work hard to ensure the citizens of this state have pristine water systems for generations to come.

### **House Committee Receives Overview on School Improvement**

On Thursday, the PreK-12 Quality subcommittee, to which I have been appointed, received an overview of Florida's school improvement process from the Florida Department of Education (DOE). The presentation showed that changes to Florida's Differentiated Accountability system (DA) for low performing schools are working for Florida's students.

Education reforms adopted in 2017 require Florida school districts to respond quickly to schools that receive a D or F grade by implementing a turnaround plan in the first year after receiving the grade. Statistics presented to the subcommittee show that 68% of DA schools graded D or F in 2017 improved their grade in 2018, 94% of DA schools graded F in 2017 improved their grade in 2018, and 59% of the first-year turnaround DA schools improved their 2018 school grade to a C or better and exited DA. In the two years after HB 7069 reforms passed, the number of schools in DA have been cut in half.

These encouraging statistics lead me to believe that Florida's school improvement system is working. I look forward to supporting any measure that will further improve these numbers and will ensure that all children in Florida receive a high quality education.

### **Higher Education & Career Readiness Subcommittee talks Career and Technical Education and State Financial Aid Programs**

This week, the Higher Education & Career Readiness subcommittee heard presentations from the Florida Department of Education (DOE) on career and technical education in both the Florida College System and technical colleges/Centers as well as state financial aid programs.

The Florida College System and the technical colleges/centers in Florida provide postsecondary access to students of all ages and from all walks of life. In particular, students can pursue postsecondary certificates, industry certifications, and associate degrees that lead to high skill/high wage employment. The committee expressed a strong desire to strengthen

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workforce education opportunities for students, and I support the Governor's sentiment in his inaugural speech that career education is vital to the state's economy.

In addition, Florida offers many state-funded programs to increase access to postsecondary education. The financial aid programs do this by: rewarding Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement, providing funds to students who may not otherwise be able to afford postsecondary education, and offering student's opportunities to pursue careers in both technical and academic fields. A few of the state financial aid programs offered include the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Programs, the Benacquisto Scholarship Program Florida Student Assistance Grants, the Florida Work Experience Program, the Effective Access to Student Education Grant Program, and the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant.

I believe through these scholarships, Florida is able to give all students a pathway to achieve their goals and pursue higher education. I will proudly support any measure which ensures a bright future for Florida's next generation.

It is an honor to serve as your State Representative in Tallahassee for District 93. As always, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, that my office may be of assistance to you please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best Wishes ,



Representative Chip LaMarca  
Florida House District 93



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