

Florida Special Session 2009A Summary

The 2009A Special Session adjourned on Wednesday January 14, 2009 at 3:00pm. The adjournment, Sine Die, came after ten days of excruciating budget cuts amounting to \$2.6 billion in reductions to the FY 08-09 budget. The \$2.6 billion reduction includes a small cushion in the event that the economy continues to decline before the end of this current fiscal year. In total, seventeen bills passed out of the House and Senate. Senate Bill 2A was the central budget bill passed, accompanied by numerous implementing bills. Reductions were not easily made, with some of the biggest cuts hitting education and health care. All passed bills will be sent to Governor Charlie Crist for approval, though he has hinted at the possibility of line item vetoes.

Potential economic stimulus was passed in the form of The Economic Gardening Business Loan Pilot Program. The loan program, championed by Governor Crist and his Office of Tourism Trade and Economic Development, aims at providing small Florida businesses with the tools necessary for expansion. An eligible business employs 10-50 people, has potential for growth and job creation, and would receive up to \$250,000 in loans at a 2% interest rate. Supporters of the bill argue that these small businesses are not able to compete with the bigger companies and struggle in this economy due to tight credit. The passage of this bill was a victory for Governor Crist.

The 2009 Legislative Session will convene on March 3, 2009, when the deficit is expected to be even greater.