

# SENATOR LINDA STEWART

2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION NEWSLETTER

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While I did not support these policy changes, many bills including curriculum crackdown and preemption bills, which will more than likely result in lawsuits and impact cities/counties budgets across Florida, have been signed into law.

## Special Sessions

There were several critical issues never addressed during regular session. As a result, legislators were called back to Tallahassee to resolve these issues in two special sessions.

In special session C, the legislature voted on revised congressional redistricting maps, and dissolved the Reedy Creek Improvement District governed by Disney.

In special session D, multiple bills to stabilize the homeowners insurance

market were passed in efforts to combat increasing premiums and mass policy cancelations. In addition a condo safety reform provision was added to one of the insurance reform bills, to improve safety standards for condominiums.

## Looking Forward to 2023

There is much work that still needs to be done, and I am already starting to organize my top priorities for the upcoming 2023 session in March. I will continue to keep my promise to combat climate change and improve our state's resiliency, fight for the preservation of our natural environment, protect and support equal rights for all, strengthen public education, tackle increasing insurance rates, and make our community a safe and prosperous place to live and work!



A Message from Senator Stewart – Dear Friends and Neighbors, The 2022 session ended, Sine Die, on March 24th and I wanted to share with you some of my office's accomplishments.


My focus was fighting for the core principles that you've entrusted me to represent. I worked on bills to protect our most vulnerable citizens, strive for equal rights for women and the LGBTQ community, and to preserve our environment.

## Budget Overview

Each year, the legislature is required to pass only one bill: the General Appropriations Act. Composing legislation for an annual budget is a difficult task, requiring legislators to balance the funding behind many different priorities to best support Floridians. This year, we had the unique challenge of a budget surplus, leading us to pass a budget of over \$100 billion. With additional funds from the federal government we were able to fund projects and implement consumer tax breaks on gas, diapers, disaster preparedness, and on items for back-to-school.

## District 13 in the Budget

An important part of the budget process is securing specific appropriations for organizations and projects in our community. I am happy to bring home over \$30 million dollars for a variety of organizations across Central Florida.



While I originally had multiple projects in the budget, the Governor's veto pen came down heavy. Over a dozen projects were lost, such as a new fire station in Winter Park, a STEM education program, and transitional housing for LGBTQ youth. However, I secured funding for the following very important projects that I am proud to have sponsored. These great projects will have a direct, positive impact on our community.

•University of Central Florida Nursing Building – \$29m for the construction of a new classroom building specifically for the nursing program.

•Advent Health – Advanced Genomics for Critically Ill Newborns – \$725k for screenings in newborns to help identify disorders for early treatment.

•Devereux Dual Diagnosis – \$500k for mental health services to individuals with both developmental and mental disabilities.

### **Legislation Passed**

Bills are extremely difficult to pass. Ideas often need a lot of work, and sometimes even great bills can get bogged down in the process. Anytime we pass a bill, it is a big deal, and I am very proud that I was able to carry two very important pieces of legislation across the finish line this session!

SB 898/HB 577 – Miya's Law; Lodging Standards:

A bill named in honor of Miya Marcano, a local resident, who was senselessly killed last year by a maintenance worker who used his access to a master key, at the apartment complex where she resided, to enter Miya's apartment. This "Lodging Standards" bill will bring checks and balances and put in place safeguards for renters. Background checks for apartment complex employees will now be required, and notice before entering a dwelling will be increased to 24 hours. Apartments will be required to establish and maintain a key log for the issuance and return of all keys that grant access to dwellings. This system will ensure that access is only given to the appropriate individual at authorized times. The law also includes a provision prohibiting hourly rentals of lodging establishments, in an effort to curb human trafficking.

SB 692/HB 341 – Sexual Offenses:

This bill establishes consistency in statute for the definition of a woman's genitals. Before this bill was passed, differences in the interpretation of statute led to different outcomes in court cases relating to sexual battery.

### **Bills Heard**

For many bills, final passage may take multiple attempts, as each session we refile bills that must go through multiple committee hearings. While they ultimately did not make it across the finish line this session, important first discussions in committees have now taken place. I'm proud to have sponsored many meaningful bills that have a direct impact on people's lives. I look forward to refileing these bills again in 2023.

SB 868/HB 525 – Mental Incapacitation: This bill creates consistency in statute for prosecuting sexual battery of a mentally incapacitated person. Regardless of whether the individual administered the intoxicating substance to themselves or if another person provided it, sexual battery of the intoxicated person would be prosecuted as a first degree felony.

SB 832/HB 561 –Implementation of the Recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force: Establishes the requirement of periodic inspections of onsite sewage disposal systems, in an effort to reduce contamination of waterways.

### **Policy Perspectives**

As legislators we debate many important topics throughout session and there was legislation that I did not agree with, from a policy perspective. Bills that restrict women's healthcare rights, reduce access to voting, marginalize students, and educational bills making teacher's jobs more difficult, are just a few examples of bills I could not support.

