

# FAST Forward

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*Florida Association of State Troopers*

## House Budget Bodes Well for FHP

The Florida House of Representatives released a \$69.2 billion budget that follows Governor Scott's lead on school funding and spares the Florida Highway Patrol any of the cuts that are widely scattered across other state agencies - including the elimination of some 4,700 state positions.

"It's actually quite a testament to the job Julie Jones and her legislative team have been doing," said FAST Executive Director Tommy Owens. "We've certainly been trying to do our part, but what they've been able to accomplish is nothing short of remarkable."

The House budget provides for \$8.8 million for patrol car purchases, down from some \$14 million requested by the governor, but still within a functional range and a vast improvement over recent years.

"The only issue there would be that it's trust fund money," said Owens. "We were pushing for GR (general revenue) funding for the vehicles in order to potentially free up trust fund dollars for other issues."

No positions within the division were cut, but the House did not appropriate funding for the LDP, something Jones hopes to remedy in the Senate budget.

"It's in place and it's time the Legislature took it seriously and started funding it," Owens said.

The House budget eliminates 4,716 full time positions (mostly in corrections and some of which are vacant), proposes a merit-based bonus program similar to Scott's and sweeps about \$277 million from trust funds into the general revenue fund.

The House included many of the critical FHP appropriations called for by Scott, including communications funding and a \$2.3 million appropriation for MDT's (mobile data terminals).

**See page 3 ▶**

### Contents

Short-takes.....	2
House Budget.....	3
Quid Pro Quo.....	4
2012 Legislation.....	5
For Your Health.....	6
In Memory.....	6
Active Duty.....	7

## Trooper Seriously Injured in Crash

A Florida Highway Patrol motorcycle trooper was seriously injured when he was struck by a car on State Road 528 in Orlando.

Trooper Dave Rodriguez, 38, was rushed to Orlando Regional Medical Center with a broken pelvis, broken arm and broken leg.

The FHP says Rodriguez was just finishing up with a citation on the side of the road when a silver Hyundai, driven by 21-year-old Brittany Mikus of Pembroke Pines, veered onto the shoulder and struck him. The force of the crash toppled his motorcycle and knocked over a speed limit sign which landed on top of Rodriguez.

"He rolled up onto her windshield, and then both her vehicle and the trooper impacted the street sign," said FHP Sergeant Kim Montes. "Three good samaritans, an off-duty paramedic, an off-duty fireman and an off-duty police officer stopped to help this trooper, took the street sign off of him and kept him stable until the fire department arrived."

"We are very lucky. We believe his helmet saved his life," Montes said. "When he rolled up on the windshield the helmet impacted it." Glass fragments were found embedded in his helmet, she added.

An investigation is ongoing and charges are pending.

Rodriguez faces additional surgeries and up to a year of recovery, the Department said.

"This is a severe-impact crash," Montes said. "We are extremely lucky he survived."



**Trooper Rodriguez**

# Short-takes



**Trooper Dennis Shorter**

Trooper Dennis Shorter (Troop G-Jacksonville) was recently honored by the Sons of the American Revolution-Jacksonville Chapter for his efforts in identifying the location of a wildfire and ensuring that nearby residents were out of harms way. On October 30, 2010, at approximately 2 a.m., Shorter was on patrol in St. Johns County when a motorist approached and informed him that heavy smoke was coming from the area of a nearby elementary school. Shorter rushed to the location, and while he did not see a fire, he did note heavy smoke. As he approached a nearby residence, he discovered the wildfire which was burning in the tops of pine trees and spreading. Shorter rushed to the home and woke two residents who were asleep. Moments later the fire department arrived and extinguished the fire and saved the home. *Thumbs up to Trooper Shorter for his quick and decisive action which averted potential disaster!*

Troopers from Troop G and Troop L, along with fellow area law enforcement officers kicked off the holidays by participating in the 7th Annual "Shop with a Cop" celebration. More than 250 school children joined troopers and other area law enforcement officers at local Wal-Mart stores where they were each given \$100 gift cards to Christmas shop. Local donations made the event possible and the children were able to buy gifts for siblings, parents, and of course, themselves. The event was once again a smashing success. *Great job!*



**Sgt. Charlotte Thompson-Smith & friend**

Recently, the 42 members of the 121st Recruit Class at the Florida Highway Patrol Training Academy got a little lesson in hands-on public service. The recruits visited Pyramid Inc., a Tallahassee-based nonprofit dedicated to helping adults with mental disabilities learn vocational and life-management skills. While at Pyramid, recruits worked with the students on arts and crafts projects and learned about the various kinds of training and therapy the facility provides. In return, the members of the 121st conducted marching and exercise drills to the delight of the students. *Thumbs up!*



**Recruits at Pyramid Tallahassee**

Preliminary figures in Florida show that traffic deaths were up dramatically from last year over the 18-day Christmas holiday period that runs through January 2. DHSMV reported that 111 people died on Florida roadways, almost double the 60 deaths that were recorded a year ago during the same travel period. The Department says it doesn't have an explanation for the spike. The Florida Highway Patrol and agencies throughout Florida beefed up enforcement during the holidays. Troopers made 505 arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the latest campaign dubbed "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over." That compares to 407 a year ago. Troopers also issued 40,000 citations over the same period.



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# House Budget Recommendations

Highlights of the Florida House of Representatives budget recommendations for the Division of the Florida Highway Patrol for FY 2012-13. Senate budget to follow. Differences to be worked out in conference committees during last two weeks of the legislative session.

## Florida House FY 2012-13

### Salaries and Benefits

#### Positions 2,157

From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	136,626,942
From Federal Grants TF	1,338,247
From Gas Tax Coll. TF	254,292
From Law Enforcement TF	379,470

## Governor Rick Scott's Budget

### Salaries and Benefits

#### Positions 2,154

From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	135,502,479
From Federal Grants TF	514,190
From Gas Tax Coll. TF	254,292
From Law Enforcement TF	359,470

### 2646 Salaries and Benefits

#### Positions 2,157

From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	136,626,942
From Federal Grants TF	1,338,247
From Gas Tax Coll. TF	254,292
From Law Enforcement TF	359,470

### 2648 Expenses

From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	7,089,296
From Federal Grants TF	362,274
From Law Enforcement TF	65,475
From Federal Law Enforcement TF	185,923

### 2649 Operating Capital Outlay

From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	428,505
From Federal Grants TF	372,000
From Federal Law Enforcement TF	252,572

### 2650 Special Categories

Acquisition of Motor Vehicles From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	8,867,965
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### 2651 Special Categories

FHP Communications System From Highway Safety OTF	1,537,500
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### 2653 Special Categories

Operation of Motor Vehicles From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	15,897,549
From Federal Grants TF	665,182
From Federal Law Enforcement TF	856,801

### 2654 Special Categories

Auxiliary Uniforms & Equip. From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	138,238
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### 2657 Special Categories

Salary Incentive Payments From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	1,397,348
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### 2661 Special Categories

Mobile Data Terminal System From Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund	2,348,410
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## House Budget continued

On the negative side, most of the anti-employee bills introduced this year are also on the House side.

House Bill 525 by Representative Ritch Workman (R-Melbourne), again tinkers with the Florida Retirement System, restoring the special risk retirement age to 50 after it was raised last year to 55. As a trade-off, however, vesting was raised again from eight to 11 years, and all employees will default into the state's investment plan unless they contact FRS within six months of employment to opt for defined benefit.

Another bill that targeted "presumption of illness" for heart-related diseases suffered by special risk members (HB 356 - Costello), was stripped of language that would have forced special risk and other first responders to prove that heart health issues were job related (See page 4 for additional information).

The House budget also calls for no increase in health insurance premiums for the next fiscal year, and a provision to allow for 90-day prescriptions for state employees for certain medications.

The Senate budget is expected out by mid-February.

# Florida Legislature: Quid Pro Quo



## Legislature Targeting Local Pensions

Fresh off a substantial revamp of the Florida Retirement System (FRS) during the 2011 Legislative Session, lawmakers, this year, have turned their attention to pension perks for police and firefighters on the local level.

Passed by the Legislature in 1999 and signed by Governor Jeb Bush the pension-perks law requires cities to dedicate extra tax revenue from property and casualty insurance premiums to enhanced benefits for local first responders.

The Florida League of Cities, the primary organization representing the state's municipalities, is pushing hard to negate the 1999 law, arguing that any additional insurance tax revenue should go to the cities' basic pension funds (among other things).

The League also claims that since 1999, Florida cities have spent more than \$460 million in extra pension benefits.

"Those monies could have been used to provide and sustain for the (pension) plan," said John Thomas, the league's director of communications and political initiatives. Under the proposed legislation, Thomas says, pension benefits instead "will be available for future police officers and firefighters."

And hence the problem with the bill, as well as Thomas' thinly-veiled, sleight-of-hand argument in support of it; while one hand is patting you on the shoulder telling you what a great guy you are, the other is slipping around and reaching for your wallet. *Thumbs down!*

## Bill Would Allow Random Drug Tests of Employees

Despite an executive order last year requiring random drug testing for state workers that floundered after it wound up in court, Florida lawmakers are pushing ahead to codify similar language into a law that would allow random drug testing of state workers and other public employees.

The bill would allow testing of public workers every three months and give public employers the ability to fire an employee following a single positive test that is confirmed.

Representative Jimmie Smith (R-Inverness), did not suggest that there is widespread drug abuse among public employees. Rather, he says he is trying to change what he called society's growing acceptance of drug use.

"It's a tool in the toolbox to fight the drug epidemic," said Smith, who last year sponsored the controversial bill that mandates drug testing of welfare recipients.

Not surprisingly, the ACLU - which is challenging Scott's executive order as well as the welfare drug testing law - is against it.

"Courts have routinely ruled that random drug tests violate the Fourth Amendment against unreasonable searches," said Howard Simon, executive director.

Simon also made a better point: "People don't sacrifice their constitutional rights just because they become employees of the state." Amen. *Thumbs down!*

## Legislation Would Revamp State Personnel Rules

*And now to complete the trifecta of bad 2012 bills...* Representative Debbie Mayfield (R-Vero Beach) has introduced legislation designed to revamp and reform the state's personnel system.

The 200-plus pages of House Bill 1261 seek to revise the provisions of the employment policy of the state, including, but not limited to, revising classification and compensation programs for state employment, establishing a procedure for furloughing state employees and extending employee probation periods indefinitely.

If that's not bad enough, the original legislation (before another 200-plus page strike-all that was introduced in committee) eliminated the annual leave carryover from year to year for state employees, eliminated lump sum payments for unused sick leave and eliminated the authorization for agencies to conduct child care programs.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and much of the detrimental language was stripped from the original bill.

However the question remains, with redistricting, a push for statewide gambling, and a budget deficit exceeding \$1 billion, how and why would lawmakers have the time or inclination to take on the challenge of revamping the state's personnel rules. Mayfield's bill does nothing short of gut the entire system, to the detriment of loyal, hardworking state employees throughout Florida. *Thumbs down!*



# 2012 Florida Legislature

The following is a list of filed legislation for the 2012 Legislative Session that FAST is either supporting, fighting or actively tracking. Please contact Drew Medcalf @ 1-800-873-2781 for the latest information on the status of these, or any bills before the Legislature.

**HB 217 by Campbell: Relating to Florida Law Enforcement Officers Hall of Fame;** (Senate 484 - Ring) Establishes Florida Law Enforcement Officers Hall of Fame. **Last action:** *In Criminal Justice Subcommittee.*



**HB 253 by Porter: Relating to State Employees' Prescription Drug Program;** (Senate 1510 - Montford) Requires DMS to authorize certain pharmacies to dispense 90-day maintenance prescription medication to certain patients; other. **Last action:** *In Health and Human Services Committee.*



**HB 365 by Costello: Relating to Public Employees;** (Senate 910 - Hays) Revises conditions under which certain special risk employees who suffer or have died from specified medical conditions are presumed to have been injured or accidentally in the line of duty; other. **Last action:** *Filed.*



**HB 525 by Workman: Relating to Retirement;** (Senate 1334 - Oelrich) Revises definitions of terms "normal retirement date" & "vested" or "vesting"; requires new employees to, by default, be enrolled in investment plan; other. **Last action:** *In Governmental Operations Subcommittee.*



**HB 542 by Smith (C): Relating to Death Benefits for State Employees;** Provides that a designated beneficiary or a member of the State Retirement System is eligible to receive the same death benefits as a joint annuitant of the member. **Last action:** *Referred to Governmental Oversight & Accountability; Budget.*



**HB 1261 by Mayfield: Relating to State Employment;** Revises provisions relating to employment policy of state; revises classification and compensation program for employment positions; directs DMS to provide to governor and legislative leaders proposal to restructure and modernize the leave benefits of the State Personnel System; other. **Last action:** *Passed Government Operations Subcommittee.*



**SB 204 by Fasano: Relating to LE and Correctional Officers;** Provides that a law enforcement or correctional officer who is injured by the intentional failure of the employing agency to comply with part VI, ch. 112, F.S. provides for injured officer to petition circuit court in county of agency headquarters to comply with aforementioned statute. **Last action:** *Referred to Criminal Justice; Judiciary; Budget.*



**SB 358 by Fasano: Relating to Police Dogs;** Requires law enforcement agencies to provide specified veterinary services, including cremation services, for police dogs that have retired from the agency's service. **Last action:** *Referred to Criminal Justice; Regulated Industries; Budget.*



**SB 244 by Bennett: Relating to Motor Vehicles;** (House 159 - Nelson) Establishes "Highway Safety Act"; providing legislative intent relating to road rage and aggressive driving; requires driver to yield left lane when being overtaken on a multilane highway; other. **Last action:** *Now in Budget.*



**SB 858 by Negron: Relating to Knowingly and Willingly Giving False Information to a Law Enforcement Officer;** (House 37 - Diaz, Plakon) Providing that it is a third degree felony for a person to knowingly and willingly give false information to a law enforcement officer conducting a missing persons investigation involving a child 16 years of age or younger with the intent to mislead the officer or impede the investigation. **Last action:** *Now in Budget Subcommittee and Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations.*



LEGEND: FOR AGAINST NEUTRAL

# For Your Health: Staph Infections: MRSA



Dr. Amir Wind

A while back I wrote an article about skin infections. I pointed out that there are two types of bacteria that are commonly found on our skin: *Streptococcus* (Strep.) and *Staphylococcus* (Staph.). This month I would like to discuss a particular type of Staph. infection known as **MRSA**.

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus - a daunting description, for sure. Remember, there are several types of Staph. bacteria. Staphylococcus aureus is the type of Staph. that is found on our skin, or in our nose. Methicillin is an antibiotic that is used to treat Staph. infections.

Okay, now that we're up to speed, let's look at some of the specifics and their importance to first responders.

Staph. on the surface of the skin do not cause problems - it is when the Staph. enters the body through a cut or wound and an infection results that we could find ourselves with the problem. Oftentimes the infection presents as an abscess (boil). Minor infections can be treated with oral antibiotics. Abscesses oftentimes need to be drained.

Up until recently, MRSA infections were largely limited to health care settings (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.). And even here they were generally seen in the very sick patients, and many times, were responsible for those patients' deaths. Over the past several years, however, MRSA has become quite common in the community at large. In fact, most of the abscesses I drain in my practice are caused by MRSA. It is particularly common in crowded settings (schools, military barracks, daycare centers), or wherever there

is the potential for close skin-to-skin contact. MRSA can be spread through shared items such as children's toys, razors, towels or sports equipment.

Many people are "colonized" with MRSA, which means they are "carriers" of the MRSA bacteria, but show no signs of infection. These people are unknowingly responsible for spreading the infection to others. In order to try to eliminate the bacteria from these people, a prescription antibiotic ointment (Bactroban) may be prescribed for them to place in their noses for a 10-day cycle. Treatment of MRSA consists primarily of utilizing one of two antibiotics: Bactrim (Septra) or Clindamycin. Sometimes both are used. If you have a Sulfa allergy you won't be able to take Bactrim.

I hope this eases any fears regarding MRSA or Staph. infections in general. As professionals who deal closely with the public on a daily basis we can be prone to contamination from a wide variety of sources; and we should be aware of the potential risks that are inherent with our jobs.

Here is the bottom line: if you have a serious underlying medical condition (diabetes, dialysis, or any medical condition that weakens your immune system) MRSA is an infection that can be fatal and must be treated quickly and aggressively. However, for the vast majority, MRSA will present as a localized skin infection, most commonly an abscess, that can be treated rather easily.

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Dr. Amir Wind attended Tulane University and is a 1994 graduate of St. George's University School of Medicine. He currently practices in Jacksonville and has a wife, Melinda, and four children. He joined the FHFA in January of 2005.

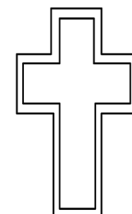


## In Remembrance...

*...of our fallen comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty in dedicated service to the Florida Highway Patrol and the citizens of the great state*

*The month of February...*

<b>Charles H. Parks</b>	<b>02/05/73</b>	<b>Yulee</b>
<b>Philip A. Black</b>	<b>02/20/76</b>	<b>Ft. Lauderdale</b>
<b>Elmer C. Barnett</b>	<b>02/14/78</b>	<b>Miami</b>
<b>James H. Fulford, Jr.</b>	<b>02/01/92</b>	<b>Monticello</b>



# Florida Highway Patrol Troopers on Active Duty



**Lt. Williams Cannon**  
Troop G - Air National Guard



**D.O. Ginny Cosson**  
Troop H - Army National Guard



**Tpr. Eugene Davis**  
Troop B - Army National Guard



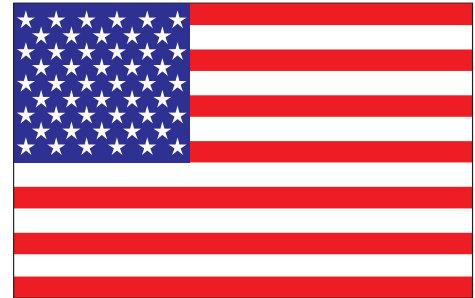
**Tpr. Torben Jensen**  
Troop D - U.S. Coast Guard



**D.O. April Patrick**  
Troop K - U.S. Army



**Tpr. Addison Turnquist, Jr.**  
Troop L - U.S. Army



## The 2012 Florida Legislative Session

Is in full swing. Stick with us for most accurate, up-to-date and relevant information.

**Gavel in to Sine Die, FAST is there for you!**

**We are your Association!**



## Franky the Dog Goes to the High Court

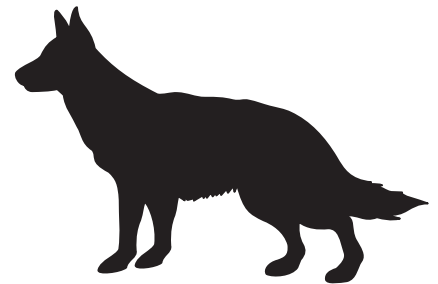
The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to take up the case of Franky the drug sniffing dog.

The Miami-based police K-9 alerted outside the door of a suspected marijuana grow house, leading to the arrest of Joelis Jardines on possession and trafficking charges. Jardines' attorney argued that allowing Franky to sniff around the home without first obtaining a search warrant was a violation of Jardines' Fourth Amendment search and seizure protections. Police in the case did get the warrant after Franky's alert.

There have been contradictory rulings on the issue before. Florida's 3rd DCA, which upheld Jardines' conviction based on an earlier Illinois ruling, said that a dog sniff - which is only going to turn up contraband, and not other things that might be considered a privacy invasion - is not the same thing as a search.

The Florida Supreme Court, however, reversed the 3rd DCA ruling, saying that it was a search, and prompting Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi to request the U.S. Supremes decide the issue.

"We believe that law enforcement needs this critical, constitutionally authorized tool as part of its crime detection arsenal to ensure our communities are safe," Bondi said.



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