



## *UF/IFAS Week 1 - January 14, 2022...Ready, set, go!*

The 2022 Legislative Session started with excitement and optimism! We are pleased to be back in the hallowed halls of the Florida Capitol.

The 2021 legislative session felt unreal - like looking into a fishbowl to try and see what's happening. There was no access to the Capitol, very limited and distant access to committee meetings, no hallway chats, and many impersonal Zoom meetings with legislators and staff.

Thankfully, things have changed this year! Our team has full access to the legislator's offices, to the friendly hallway conversations, the impromptu meetings, and to the overall synergy that's created through the entirety of the 60-day sprint that is Florida's legislative session.

A buzz of enthusiasm for a great budget year is in the air as the legislature is looking towards a significant proposed Governor's budget increase based on general revenue estimates. UF/IFAS is looking to secure funding for IFAS Workload Expansion, Nutrient Rate Research, Ecosystem Services, Vet Med Expansion, and a whole host of local projects impacting all regions of Florida. This week, we have had the pleasure of discussing these proposals amongst legislative leadership and staff.

Here are some Week 1 Session Highlights:

### **Florida Governor Ron DeSantis**

Opened the 2022 Legislative Session with positive messages, legislative successes, fulfillment of goals, highlighted his drive to do more for the State of Florida.

### **Florida Senate President Wilton Simpson**

*"Every Legislature, every year, has another chance to make choices about what kind of government Florida is going to have. This Session we have another chance to sow the seeds that will grow our tomorrow."*

### **Florida House Speaker Chris Sprowls**

*"It's our job as legislators to see the entire horizon, the full spectrum. It's our responsibility to appreciate the complexities and balanced perspectives, to see both the risks and the opportunities presented in every issue, and to find a right path forward."*

**For More Information, Please Contact UF/IFAS Governmental Affairs at 850-270-4010**

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## *FYIFAS Week 2 - January 21, 2022...We're Jogging to the Next Sprint*

We have wrapped up the second week of the 2022 legislative session!

This week, Team IFAS has continued to meet with legislators and staff to promote our top funding priorities. We have received much support around our statewide workload needs, nutrient application rate research, ecosystem service research, and expanding our college of veterinary medicine.

The budget process is ramping up as we anticipate the first rollout of the budget sometime in the next two weeks. It's crunch time as all projects must be heard in the appropriations subcommittees next week or they will have a slim chance of making it into the final budget. Fortunately, we are making progress, but there is still much to be done.

UF/IFAS priorities fall under the respective Higher Education and Agriculture appropriation subcommittees. The Senate and House budget bills are based on the recommendations of the subcommittee chair's budgets for each funding silo. Once this is done, we will see where our budget items stand and where to work to have our projects make it into the budget.

A big thank you goes out to the Florida Cattlemen's Association, United Dairy Farmers, and the Florida Forestry Association. Many traveled to the Capitol this week to advocate for policies that directly impact their industry and for IFAS. We always enjoy spending time with the industry associations while they are up in the capital city. Grassroots work!

Stay tuned 'til next week's potentially interesting FYIFAS.



### *FYIFAS Week 3 - January 27, 2022... Things are moving Forward*

Well, we've wrapped up week 3 of the legislative session and are pleased that we are going into the budget process in pretty good shape.

All our priority projects have been approved in the House Appropriations subcommittees, so they are in a proper posture to be included in the House proposed budget. We'll know in the next week when the Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs release the first roll-out of the budget numbers. *It's nail-biting time.*

In addition, the following projects requested by legislators have passed out of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee:

- West FL Research and Extension Student Dorms
- Everglades Research and Education Center Dormitory/ Museum Project
- Joint Florida Lakewatch and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Building
- Fishing for Success

This week we had the pleasure of meeting with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association's Emerging Leaders. We discussed the legislative budget process and shared our UF/IFAS priority projects. We want to thank them for expressing their support of IFAS funding while they were up here to learn about the legislative process.

We would also like to thank the Florida Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers for their support of the UF/IFAS mission and legislative priorities during their visit to the Capitol.

We are looking forward to Gator Day at the Capitol on February 15<sup>th</sup> and showcasing Florida 4-H as we bring our youth and volunteers members from across Florida on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. We will continue to update you as more details come out about their visits.

Tune in next week for the next issue of FYIFAS. It's either going to be awesome or...well, let's just wait and see.



## *FYIFAS Week 4 - February 3, 2022.... Round One*

We have closed on week 4 of the Florida Legislative Session and are pleased to report that our budget priorities are alive and moving forward.

The Senate and the House Appropriations Sub-committees just released the first run of the budget numbers. We are looking good in the Senate as many of our budget requests received full or partial funding. The House budget contains funds for many of our projects, so we are going into the budget process in good shape.

We have a lot of work to do, but it is a good budget year, and we are optimistic that the final budget will be in our favor.

Much of the attention in Tallahassee this Session has orbited around the proposed State House, State Senate, and Congressional district maps that have shifted the lines of representation across the state of Florida. There have been many spirited debates and discussions over these new districts as it is a very competitive issue.

Redistricting is conducted every 10 years in accordance with the state and federal constitutions and follows the release of the U.S. Census. Post-COVID, Florida's population growth has warranted a **new congressional district** in Central Florida and an elector in the **Electoral College**.

In other news, **Governor Ron DeSantis** has issued a State of Emergency following the arctic blast impacting agriculture across the state of Florida. Issued for 31 counties, the state of emergency addresses the need for emergency harvesting of commodities. In a statement made by the governor's office:

*"The Florida Division of Emergency Management has been working closely with each of the counties impacted by the freezing temperatures, will remain in constant contact with these counties, and will provide any support needed."*

Read the official executive order [Here](#).

We've finished round one and are still in the game but next week is Hump Week and we don't have a camel. Stay tuned for our next FYIFAS.



### *FYIFAS Week 5 - February 11, 2022... Historic Numbers*

The 2022 legislative session is in full swing and picking up speed with a whirlwind of bills and budget proposals moving through committees this week. Both budget bills have been passed through appropriation committees. During this stage, it is extremely important to monitor the numerous amendments to watch for any changes that would affect our budget and so far, the impacts have been positive.

Next week, the Senate and House will vote on their budget bills on the floor. The proposed budget amounts and priorities are significantly different between the chambers, promising a long and robust debate. In comparison, the FY 2021-22 budget is \$101.5 billion, whereas the proposed FY 2022-23 budget is 105.2 billion and the proposed Senate budget is 108.5 billion.

The next step will be the budget conference process during which the committees negotiate until they come to an agreement on every issue and combine the two bills into one. This process usually begins sometime during the last 2 weeks of the session.

At this point, UF IFAS is in good shape with most of our budget issues being partially or fully funded in one or both bills. This is paramount as every appropriation request must be included in at least one bill to be a part of the negotiation for the final bill.

Some of the major policy bills worked through the committees as well as the Senate and House chambers this week were the topics of fiery debate. We are only halfway through the process and tempers are already beginning to flare.

On Wednesday, during an extended discussion on [CS/HB 1291 Nutrient Application Rates](#), Team IFAS received unexpected praise and a stamp of confidence from several Representatives for the importance of the cutting-edge research IFAS provides for the industry.

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We are looking forward to Gator Day at the Capitol on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Visitors from all over the Gator Nation will be here. UF/IFAS will be set up in the main entrance of the Capitol and will be hosting fresh orange juice tastings, handing out snack bags of carrots, and highlighting our contributions to the state's agricultural industry. If you are in the Capitol area, come by and visit us!

*We are extremely pleased to have made it through week 5, the hump week of session successfully and we didn't even have a camel.*



## *FYIFAS Week 6 - February 18, 2022... For the Gator Good*

The sixth week of the 2022 legislative session has been all about money for UF/IFAS. On Wednesday, the House voted to approve their proposed \$105.3 billion budget for the coming fiscal year. On Thursday, the Senate passed their \$108.6 billion proposal, setting the stage for the budget conference to negotiate the final bill to begin.

The \$3.3 billion difference in the two spending plans is scattered across a number of spending priorities including issues like school funding, a pay raise for state workers, affordable housing, and hospitals.

The legislative session is scheduled to end on March 11th. To end on time, legislators must work out the differences in the two budget bills by March 8th. That allows for the 72-hour waiting period, required by the Florida Constitution, before the final passage of the budget.

On Tuesday, amidst the budget talks, we celebrated Gator Day. Folks from across the Gator Nation came up to join the celebration of UF. We demonstrated UF/IFAS' latest in artificial intelligence research and the economic impact on Florida agriculture. Many visitors stopped by the UF/IFAS display and had the opportunity of tasting some of our newest (and sweetest) Florida citrus varieties.



We also had Florida-grown carrots. UF/IFAS has been working with Grimmway Farms to develop best management practices for growing carrots, an emerging crop in North Florida. We want to extend sincere thanks to Grimmway Farms, for donating nearly 300 lbs. of snack-sized carrots to hand out to passersby.

Overall, Gator Day was a huge success and a fantastic opportunity to highlight UF/IFAS' contributions to the agriculture industry.

Thank you to everyone who made Gator Day great!

*Be sure to tune in next week for another riveting episode of FYIFAS.*



## *FYIFAS Week 7 - February 25, 2022..... Please send chocolate*

As lawmakers get closer to Sine Die, the end of session, the chance for passage of bills is dwindling.

Many committees are winding down their work and no longer meeting after Monday, February 28th. Senate committees, other than the Rules Committee, are prohibited from meeting again after the 50th day of session unless the rule is waived to allow for a committee meeting if needed.

We are fast approaching budget negotiations. Most of the IFAS funding requests have funds in one or both of the Senate and House budget bills. This puts us in play to be included in the negotiations during which we will be working to make sure our projects make it into the final bill - hopefully, the requested amount.

We are expecting the budget conference to begin as early as Monday. Meanwhile, we have been meeting with legislators to make a final pitch for our funding.

The budget conference usually lasts about 1 ½ weeks including the weekend. During this time, the conference committees meet on 1-hour notice, sometimes well into the night. This is when the no-joke rule comes into play as few people have a sense of humor left. It is intense! Tempers flare and patience is rare as lobbyists and legislators are hoping (some desperately) for success for what they have been working towards for 9 months. Team IFAS has developed coping mechanisms that include French fries, lots of chocolate, and you know, staying hydrated.

In other news, our team was joined by over 900 youth and volunteers from across the state for the Florida 4-H Day at the Capitol. The halls were filled with a sea of green as youth met with their legislators and had the chance to engage in the legislative process.

Overall, it was an excellent showcase of Florida 4-H and highlighted the amazing program impacting 200,000 of Florida's youth.

*Be sure to tune in next week to make sure we're still here.*



## *FYIFAS Week 8 - March 4, 2022..... "Coming in hot"*

We're in the home stretch, a race to the finish, the last leg, the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the 9<sup>th</sup> inning, the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, the count-down to Sine Die! In other words, we're close to the end of the 2022 Legislative Session and we're coming in hot.

The budget conference process began on Tuesday, and we have made progress increasing some of the IFAS dollar amounts in the budget proposals. We still have a couple of days, as the legislature has until Tuesday to finalize negotiations in order to vote on the budget by March 11.

As budget negotiations continue, the conference subcommittees have chipped away at their differences. Thursday night, all unresolved issues were "bumped" up to the Senate and House Appropriations Committee Chairs. When they reach an impasse, any unresolved issues will be bumped to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House.

Both the House and Senate are spending a lot of time in the chambers, often into the night, breaking sporadically for budget meetings. There are still a lot of bills queued up to move toward final passage but not all of them will make it across the finish line.

In other news, the Florida Legislature stood tall for shortcake, passing a bill that designates strawberry shortcake as the official state dessert. Many legislators spoke in support of this "berry" good bill, highlighting the legislature's support of our farmers, agricultural commodities, and the investments we have in supporting Florida-grown produce.

*'The only thing I will ask from this bill is when you go and buy your groceries, look at the label and buy Florida.' - Rep. Lawrence McClure*

*Tune in next week for the season finale of FYIFAS. It better not be a cliff hanger.*



## *FYIFAS Week 9 - or er.... 10?- March 16th, 2022*

Did you think you missed the season finale of FYIFAS last week? Wondering if we succumbed to the diet of French fries and chocolate? *BTW, a big thanks to all of you who sent chocolate!!* Well let me tell you, the last two weeks of session were truly a nailbiter.

The conference committee negotiated the final budget for over a week while we waited to see how UF/IFAS fared. The final proposed budget hit the desk at 1:53 pm, Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, leading to a delay of the end of session. The legislature adjourned sine die Monday afternoon after completing a one-day overtime session for a final vote on the budget.

Well, it was worth the wait. Despite the long nights and weekends, stress induced eating, my two new lbs. and the cost of a very necessary manicure, UF/IFAS did exceptionally well. We are thrilled to report that all priority projects have been funded including:

- **\$8,763,753** - Research on nutrient application rate on citrus, corn, green beans, tomatoes, and potatoes with the intention of adding additional crops.
- **\$3,615,000** – UF/IFAS base budget (Workload).
- **\$1,100,000** - Geomatics program, an undergraduate program in the study of Geospatial Analysis, Surveying and Mapping and more.
- **\$2.2 million** - Ecosystem Services Project which will develop an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to identify, validate, and quantify ecosystem services delivered by agricultural and natural systems in Florida.
- **\$2.5 million** - Florida Friendly Landscaping to expand the program, outreach, and promotion to encourage ecologically sustainable, science-based landscaping practices to protect water resources.
- **\$1.9 million** - Two student dorms. Graduate Students at the West Florida REC will benefit from much needed housing which is very limited in rural areas.

The \$112 billion spending package is the largest ever in Florida, and up from the current year budget of \$101.7 billion. This increase is due to the large influx of Federal Covid assistance money and a strong recovery in the economy. It's the second straight year in which lawmakers have increased the size of the state budget by about 10%


The next step is the Governor’s desk for signature or (and I hate to write it out loud but) vetoes. The budget goes into effect July 1.


We are also pleased to report that the legislature invested in UF, adopting remarkable investments to enhance student financial aid; supporting maintenance and construction efforts across campus; increase the annual number of UF College of Veterinary Medicine graduates and advance breakthrough medical research happening at UF Health.



We are so grateful. There are so many to thank for the hard work and support; legislators, legislative staff, agricultural lobbyists, and you – our friends. Thanks to you IFAS had one of the most successful legislative sessions in the history of UF/IFAS.

We hope to see you next year, for another potentially captivating season of FYIFAS!

  
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