STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 21, 2011

(This update is produced by the UH System Office of Governmental Relations and the UH Division of University Advancement as a service to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.)

House Proposed Appropriations are Unveiled

Two events secured most of the time and attention this week: the inauguration of Gov. Perry and Lt. Gov. Dewhurst and the unveiling of the House's proposed 2012-2013 appropriation. Regents Carroll Robertson Ray, Welcome Wilson, Sr., Mica Mosbacher, Jim Wise, Jarvis Hollingsworth, along with Chancellor Renu Khator, attended the inaugural and took the opportunity to meet with a number of legislative leaders.

Drastic reductions are made in the proposed House appropriations. Total formula funding was reduced statewide approximately fourteen percent. For each of our universities, these formula cuts range from eight to thirteen percent due to changes in weighted enrollment growth. With the exception of the Small Business Development Centers which is certified by the Comptroller as revenue neutral, all special items are cut by approximately 29 percent. In addition, system administration funding of $4 million biennially is eliminated. Collectively, the biennial appropriations for all components of the University of Houston System are reduced by almost $100 million when current biennial reductions and lost federal stimulus funding is included. Vice Chancellor Carlucci has posted details which can be reviewed at http://www.uh.edu/af/budgetinfo.htm.

All financial aid programs, including TEXAS grants and work study were decimated. Both the Texas Research Incentive Fund (TRIP) and incentive formula funding were zeroed out. The Research Development Fund (RDF) was reduced $19.2 million. Four community colleges receive no funding in the bill. Overall, the proposal cuts in higher education amount to $1.7 billion, a 7.6 percent decrease.

The document was presented by Representative (and presumptive Appropriations Chair) Jim Pitts. It is referred to as a document because as of today he has not officially filed it as a bill. The Senate has not yet laid out an appropriations proposal. However, the Senate Finance committee has tentatively scheduled the University of Houston System's appropriations hearing for Monday, February 14.

Next Monday, the House will consider and vote on House Rules. The proposed rules include two new committees (Government Reform and Economic Development) and an increase in the membership of the powerful Calendars Committee. Once the rules have been adopted, the members will have the opportunity file seniority preference cards for committee assignments. The Speaker will then appoint the committees. The Senate begins Monday with debate on the voter identification.

NEW LEGISLATION OF PARTICULAR INTEREST

HB 706 by Representative John Davis authorizes the downward expansion at UH Clear Lake

HB 750 by Representative Joe Driver allows concealed handguns on campus

Please see the weekly bill report for all the bills we are tracking. For more information on the legislature and legislation, please see http://www.capitol.state.tx.us