



Governor's Budget Proposal Includes Important First Steps Toward Restoring Investment in Florida's Future

It's unfortunate that these first steps come in the governor's last budget proposal

FPI Staff
November 2017

Governor Rick Scott's "Securing Florida's Future" Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19 totals \$87.4 billion, the largest proposed budget of the governor's tenure. At first glance the proposal reflects some positive investments in Sunshine State and its families, including increased funding for environmental protection, human services and public safety. After the draconian cuts that marked the first seven years of his administration, however, the result falls far short of securing a Florida future of shared prosperity benefiting all its residents.

Smaller package of tax cuts in FY 2018-19 recommended budget

The proposed tax expenditure package, which is \$180 million for fiscal year (FY) 2018-19, is a far cry from the current year's budget proposal, which included \$618 million in business and sales tax cuts, or \$1 billion in cuts proposed in the previous year.

Long-term public investment, however, not short-term reductions in taxes and fees, is key to economic growth.

The governor's recommended budget for FY 2018-19 includes:

- \$88 million in sales tax holidays, including an expansion of the back-to-school tax holiday from the current three days to 10 days and three weeks of disaster preparedness tax holidays
- A reduction in Florida Driver's License fees from the current fee of \$48 to \$20

Investing in public education

The proposed budget maintains continued funding for public education, prekindergarten through state universities. Although the budget includes an increase of \$200 per public K-12

student, more than \$155 of the increase is borne through local property taxes. Moreover, the increase from \$7,300 to \$7,500 does not close the gap in funding needed to compensate for losses during the recession after accounting for inflation over the period.

Investing in healthy families

The proposed budget provides an increase of more than \$835 million for health and human services. Of specific note, the budget would:

- Add an additional \$53 million to address the opioid epidemic
- Add 130 positions for protecting children from abuse
- Include employment services for Floridians who have behavioral health or developmental needs
- Fund an additional 900 Floridians who are currently on waiting lists with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

Investing in public safety

Scott also proposes an increase of almost \$190 million (4 percent) for public safety. The budget would:

- Provide an additional \$30 million to increase the salaries of 4,800 law enforcement officers
- Add \$8 million to provide a 10 percent salary increase for Juvenile Detention and Probation Officers.
- Provide \$68 million and create 476 positions to rehabilitate inmates who have mental health issues.

Investing in the environment

The proposed budget includes an increase of almost \$190 million to protect and preserve Florida's natural resources. Governor Scott recommends funding of \$50 million to the Florida Forever Program to acquire and maintain sensitive waters and lands. The budget also recommends funding for Everglades restoration and continued repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike at Lake Okeechobee.

Florida Policy Institute Staff will continue to analyze and report on details of the Governor's proposal in the coming weeks.