

# Capitol e-Report - Political Tension Grows Over Florida Budget Impasse

April 22, 2009

The political tension between the House and Senate is growing each day the Senate President and House Speaker remain unable to resolve macro-level differences in each chambers' approach to the budget. At issue is a big disagreement on budget allocations for broad appropriation policy categories, e.g., education and health care.

As a practical matter, the printed budget would have to be distributed by next Tuesday afternoon in order for the House and Senate to adjourn sine die on time Friday, May 1.

Florida's Constitution requires a 72-hour "Cooling Period" between receipt of the printed budget and a final vote on the budget.

The actual conference process at the lower member level is yet to begin due to the impasse – it was supposed to begin last Monday morning. It is still possible for the leadership to resolve differences and proceed with a shortened conference process and a timely adjournment, but with each day passing, a May 1 adjournment seems more and more unlikely.

One possible way to handle a late budget is to have a "soft" adjournment on Friday, May 1, for all substantive legislation, with the Legislature returning sometime during the next week to take up only budget issues and bills related thereto. This could include revenue bills, such as the corporate taxation and loophole bills, being advanced by the Senate, as well as the Seminole Gaming Compact. Revenue bills clearly impact the outcome of the final budget deal. All substantive bills not enacted by the end of the day on May 1 would die.

More as we know more. Thanks.

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