

\$670 Million Added to the New State Budget Through the Sprinkle Lists Deserves Close Scrutiny During the Governor's Veto Deliberations

MAY 2023

Florida's new state budget for FY2023-24 carries a price tag of \$117.0 billion, which is a 6.2 percent increase over current spending. The

budget also contains a few billion dollars in spending that is technically appropriated for FY2022-23, so it is not included in the \$117.0 billion total.

There is much to applaud in the new budget. It is record-breaking in many ways, but it is not all positive, including funding the largest number of local member projects in history—more than 1,500. Considering there are only 160 legislators, the number of member projects in the budget is even more remarkable. As we point out in our annual Budget Turkey Watch report, many member projects are worthwhile, sometimes critical. Others are not. Regardless of the value of any project, they should all get the review and deliberation taxpayers deserve when their money is being spent. In addition, they should follow any established competitive selection process that the Legislature has established for similar projects.

The budget also contains \$670 million added at the last minute through Supplemental Funding Initiatives, which have come to be known as the “sprinkle lists.” During the last ten years, it has become routine for the budget conference process to end with each chamber accepting the other's sprinkle list, worth more than an average of \$120 million for each chamber – or a combined average of \$285 million. These lists are developed and agreed to in private by House and Senate leadership, and without any public debate or discussion.

This means that this year, \$670 million in hard-earned taxpayer dollars will be spent almost as an afterthought, after all the various budget areas had been “closed-out.” These lists can include additional funding for established, valuable statewide government programs. This year was no different with money added for Medicaid reimbursement rate increases for nursing homes and other providers, university and college operations, alternative water supply, bonuses to attract corrections officers to high vacancy institutions, state courts due process costs, and graduate medical education.

It is understandable that there can be some money left over when budget negotiations are finished. Adding money to existing programs in this way, while certainly not the best budget practice, is not as bad as adding new projects or increasing member project funding.

Florida TaxWatch's preliminary review of the sprinkle lists has identified 38 projects worth \$53.3 million that meet criteria for our Budget Turkey Watch report. The list below contains projects that were either added to the budget for the first time (not in the Senate or House final budget) or were removed from the budget during conference only to be added back through the sprinkle lists. There are other projects on the sprinkle lists that may meet other turkey criteria. Florida TaxWatch will identify those, and items in other areas of the budget, as we continue with our turkey review.

Florida TaxWatch is releasing this analysis early in our turkey review process to assist Governor DeSantis in his own budget review. We recommend close scrutiny of

not only the items on this list but the entire sprinkle lists.

Florida TaxWatch also reiterates its recommendation that competitive review and selection processes be created in statute for some areas in the budget where the lack of such a process has become a glaring problem. Member projects are peppered throughout the budget, but there are several line-items where one can count on numerous projects ending up. If the Legislature is going to fund such projects, they should be prioritized; funded with a transparent, coordinated, and statewide vision; compete for limited funding fairly; and meet specified criteria and requirements to qualify for funding. This is especially true for local water projects. Despite the numerous existing grant programs created by the Legislature, including some recently, the budget contains more and more member water projects that circumvent these processes. The year's budget funds a record \$433 million worth of these. In addition to creating selection processes, Florida TaxWatch recommends the Governor pays special attention to these areas:

- Water Projects
- Local Transportation Projects
- Housing and Community Development Projects
- School and Instructional Enhancements
- Private College and University Projects
- Special Local Law Enforcement Projects
- Local Fire Service
- Economic Development Projects
- Local Emergency Management Facilities
- Workforce Projects

Buoyed by federal pandemic funds and unprecedented growth in revenue collections produced by Florida's

economy, the Legislature has had an incredible amount of money to spend over the last three years. On balance, it has done a very good job. Lawmakers have been able to make generational investments in the state's infrastructure, increase funding for vital programs such as housing and the environment, begin to address sea level rise, raise teacher and state employee pay, reduce state debt, and provide record breaking tax relief. This has been accomplished while still keeping a high level of reserves; however, including unobligated general revenue (GR) reserves, are getting smaller.

After accounting for all the spending in the General Appropriations Act and other substantive bills, the state is expected to have \$5.3 billion in unobligated GR.¹ While still an exceptional amount, it is down from the \$17.7 billion balance that was estimated at the end of this fiscal year and the \$22.8 billion the state had left over in FY 2021-22.

The growth in revenue the state has enjoyed may not happen again. Economists are expecting growth to at least slow considerably in the near future. We must continue to be responsible with taxpayer money.

Florida TaxWatch recommends that the Governor fully examine the sprinkle list and member project funding in the new state budget and, in the future, the use of sprinkle lists be discontinued. This practice does not align with sound budgeting processes, fiscal transparency, thoughtful deliberation, or with the best interests of the taxpayers of the state of Florida.


¹ The 2023 Legislature did add \$1.0 billion to the Budget Stabilization Fund and \$500 million to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund.


Preliminary Turkey Review of Sprinkle List		
Line Item	Project	Amount
17	Indian River State College (IRSC) Renovation Facility No. 34 (Science Center), Main Campus	4,000,000
17	Miami Dade College - Rem/Ren Fac 14 (Gym) for Justice Center North	5,089,953
58	Beacon College - Tuition scholarships for students with learning and attention issues	500,000
58	Florida Career College - Student Expense Assistance Program	400,000
58	Herzing University Advanced Nursing lab/Simulation Training Center	400,000
100	Flight Adventure Deck, a STEM to STAY Education and Scholarship Program	1,675,000
100	Wayman Academy of the Arts	500,000
315	All Star Children's Foundation - Sarasota	1,000,000
378	CBHC Central Receiving Facility for Charlotte & DeSoto Counties	1,390,635
378	Jersey Commons - Project for Housing and Health	3,350,000
378	Jewish Family Services Affordable Psychiatry Access - Palm Beach County	750,000
378	LifeStream - Central Receiving System - Citrus County	1,500,000
378	Mental Health Dimensions of Wellness	100,000
404	City of Hallandale Beach - Austin Hepburn Senior Mini-Center	111,006
458	Agape School Healthcare Expansion	500,000
458	St. John Bosco Clinic	500,000
459	Nurse Family Partnership Sustainability and Expansion Funding	1,000,000
474 B	Aventura Free-Standing Emergency Department - Generator Expansion	1,000,000
483	Therapeutic and Diagnostic Innovations In The Care Of Patients with Alzheimer's Disease	1,000,000
748	Second Chance Program - 6th Judicial Circuit	350,000
1207	Oak Street Home II - Female Teen Delinquency Prevention Program	630,000
1589 A	Closing the Kosher Meal Gap	374,000
1705 A	Brevard Co Eau Gallie NE Construction Environ. Dredging/Interstitial Water Treatment	5,010,244
1705 A	Deltona Eastern Wastewater Facility Expansion - Sewer Improvement/Water Quality	2,000,000
1705 A	Hallandale Beach Rehabilitation of Lift Stations #10, #11 and #15	945,000
1705 A	Palm Beach County Glades Region Infrastructure Improvements	1,500,000
1705 A	Riviera Beach Utility Special District Three Critical Lift Station Replacement	1,000,000
1705 A	Tampa Bay Water Morris Bridge Wellfield Improvements	2,500,000
2042 A	1st Avenue North and 25th Street Pedestrian Safety	500,000
2042 A	Nassau County - County Rd 108 Extension (Paralleling east/west corridor to SR200/AIA)	1,500,000
2042 A	Pine Island Road/Stringfellow Road Traffic Circle	2,800,000
2042 A	Moffitt Cancer Center Life Sciences Campus Road	5,000,000
2341 A	Blountstown City Hall	500,000
2341 A	City of Bradenton - 9th Street Park	1,000,000
2341 A	Endeavor Park Conference Center - Jackson County	1,000,000
3233	Historic Pensacola	275,000
3265	Palladium Theater Renovation - St. Petersburg College	850,000
3270 A	Military History Museum Building Expansion - Osceola	765,000
Total:		53,265,838



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