

Governmental Services Committee
Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission
221 Senate Office Building
Tallahassee, Florida
8:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.
May 18, 2007

Committee Members: *(Roberto “Bobby” Martinez, Chair; Barney Barnett, Martha Barnett, Mark Bostick, Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte, Bruce Kyle, Robert “Bob” McKee, Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr., Randy Miller, Jade Moore, James A. Scott)*

Members Present:

Roberto “Bobby” Martinez, Chair
Barney Barnett
Martha Barnett
Mark Bostick
Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte
Robert “Bob” McKee
Randy Miller
Jade Moore
James A. Scott

Excused Absences:

Bruce Kyle
Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr.

The Governmental Services Committee was called to order by Chair Martinez at 8:30 a.m.

Staff called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

Discussion of Committee’s Scope of Work

Chair Martinez asked members of the committee to review the scope of work assigned to the body and asked members for comment on how to proceed.

Commissioner Martha Barnett expressed that it was important, wherever possible, not to “re-create the wheel,” and to take advantage of work already produced by groups such as the Collins Center for Public Policy (Tough Choices), and other public and private groups. Committee should determine what has already been done in the areas of interest.

Further, Commissioner Barnett indicated that on the subject of constitutional limitations, there were a number of well-respected tax attorneys whom members can help to identify that could address the question of limitations.

The Chair indicated that he would like for the first several meetings to be focused on educational presentations.

Commissioner James Scott agreed with Commissioner Barnett that the committee didn't need to reinvent the wheel, but pointed out that the group needed to remain cognizant of the fact that the state is obviously in a period of change and flux. Education and transportation may be areas of specific focus for the group.

Commissioner Barney Barnett inquired about whether the class size amendment would fall under the purview of the committee.

The Chair indicated that he did not know the specific answer, but it would seem to fit. He indicated that the committee would follow up on that question. He also asked whether the committee should consider making changes that would allow local governments to create their own revenue sources.

A general discussion of the members followed indicating an understanding that the Commission could look at recommending changes to the law, creating tax districts, etc.

Commissioner Robert "Bob" McKee indicated that it was important to remember that the committee needs to look at both state and local government. Most importantly, he emphasized the importance of discussion about how to determine both revenue sources and needs. One parameter should be that governments should have to justify the need before revenues are allocated.

Commissioner Martha Barnett agreed and suggested that the Chair might want to consider subcommittees for state and local issues.

Commissioner Scott spoke about the delivery of government services. He indicated that while the general public's perception is that cuts are needed, in fact, the problem may be efficiency in administration. Efficiency is definitely an area that needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte expressed a long-standing concern about the integrity of the revenue estimating process and indicated that was an area for review.

Commission Chair Allan Bense joined the group and reminded members that while it will be important, ultimately, to limit the scope of issues, at this point it is important to keep open minds on all issues and to use the educational process to explore new ideas.

Order of Future Discussions

Chair Martinez asked the group if there was a preference for the order of addressing the issues in committee.

Commissioner Jade Moore expressed a strong position that a discussion of needs should be the first order of business. He thought that Florida's governments have been cobbled together over time and that this was an excellent opportunity to determine what the needs are, not necessarily to raise taxes, but to increase efficiencies. He indicated that the committee should focus on the "long-view" vision for government.

Commissioner Barney Barnett reminded the members of the focus of the committee and the importance of defining needs before moving forward.

The Chair indicated that the consensus seemed to be to start with examining the revenue needs of the state and its local governments and evaluating the demand and requirements for operational services and capital facilities by state and local government during the next twenty years. In addition, he indicated that the issues related to constitutional limitations should come early in the committee's educational process.

Commissioner McKee stated the importance of understanding what the limitations are and what constraints those limitations may place on various governments.

Commissioner Martha Barnett spoke about the need to fully understand the state / local differential. She discussed the devolution over time of responsibilities to various arms of government and the need to understand that cause and effect.

The Chair requested that we not appoint subcommittees at this time, but try to focus their education on the separate issues of local and state governments as a committee.

Next Steps

The Chair indicated that the committee may need to schedule full days of meetings to focus on some of the major issues. He asked if members would prefer to arrange some meetings in Orlando or Tampa in addition to Tallahassee meetings. The committee agreed that would be a good idea.

The Chair asked that all members let staff know of any possible conflict dates and best dates for future meetings.

Commissioner Scott reiterated the importance of the public input process later in the discussions. The Chair noted that all meetings will be transparent and open to the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 A.M.