

TALLAHASSEE – On Tuesday, the state's record-setting, \$77 billion election-year budget goes into effect, along with 157 other bills approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Scott. The laws range from the "Florida GI Bill" which is intended to make Florida the most military-friendly state in the nation, to lowering college costs and banning the sale of electronic cigarettes to minors.



A law bans the sale of electronic cigarettes to those under 18. (Photo: Brian Hirten/The News-Press)

The electronic cigarettes ban doesn't seem to be that much of a concern to some of the more than 70 such stores in Southwest Florida that sell e-cigarette products.

Chris Jordan, a sales clerk at The Vape Store in south Lee County, said the store has always had a policy of not selling to minors.

"We still get people coming in now and then picking up juice for their under-age friends," he said.

"We stop them in the process if we feel they are getting things for friends that are under 18. We tell them we can't sell them anything."

He said one customer, just over 18, tried to buy five starter kits for his under-age friends. He said the customer was asked to leave even when he said he would just buy one.

Jordan said that if a customer can't produce an ID then they are asked to leave.

At Lotus Smoke Shop in south Fort Myers, clerk Kayla Logsdon said those under 18 have never been allowed to purchase e-cigarette products.

"We check their ID," she said. "If they are under 18 they leave."

Pam Yates at Naples Vapor in Cape Coral said that if a customer is under 18 they won't even get in the store. Even those under 18 trying to buy vapor liquid without nicotine are turned away, she said. Yates said Naples Vapor has always had a no-minors-allowed policy but appreciated the new law, even if it meant no specific changes. "They are pretty much backing us up," she said.

Also, starting Tuesday, private information of people involved with animal research at public research facilities will no longer be public, insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage or increasing rates based on a customer's gun ownership, and the state's unpaid poet laureate position will no longer be a lifetime appointment.

A measure (SB 156) to reduce the cost of motor vehicle registration fees goes into effect Sept. 1, while another 34 bills — including one (HB 59) that creates new penalties for those who harm an unborn child at any stage of development — become law on October 1.

For the year, lawmakers sent 255 bills to Scott, with just one getting vetoed: SB 392, which would have allowed the Florida Department of Transportation to raise the speed on some highways by 5 mph.

Highlights of some of the new laws:

- **HB 5001:** the spending plan, the largest in state history, spreads around a hefty surplus, adding new money to public schools, state colleges and universities, environmental projects and child welfare while leaving room for about \$500 million in tax and fee cuts that are already being used as a centerpiece for Scott's re-election campaign.



The budget spreads around a hefty surplus, adding new money to schools and colleges. (Photo: NEWS-PRESS FILE PHOTOS)

- **HB 7015:** called the "Florida GI Bill," provides university tuition waivers for veterans, pays for military and guard base improvements, is expected to help increase employment opportunities for veterans and allocates \$1 million a year to sell the state to veterans. The more than \$30 million package requires Visit Florida to spend \$1 million a year on marketing aimed at veterans and allocate another \$300,000 to a new nonprofit corporation, Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. that would be used to encourage veterans to move to Florida and promote the hiring of veterans.
- **HB 559:** redesigns 11 military-related specialty license plates and adds a new special use plate — the Combat Medical Badge plate — to the inventory. The law also changes all references of the Korean Conflict to the Korean War and the Vietnam Era to the Vietnam War.
- **SB 864:** requires school districts to set up a process through which parents can contest the selection of certain textbooks and classroom materials.
- **SB 1642:** related to the new tests from American Institutes for Research, being instituted in the 2014-15 school year. That plan, modeled on a blueprint developed by Education Commissioner Pam Stewart, would simplify the formula for grading schools. It would also do away with the penalties schools could currently receive for the grades assigned in the 2014-15 school year — a plan meant to provide a transition year as schools adjust to the new standards and tests.
- **HB 732:** aims to reduce the cost of college by revamping the formula that determines how much families pay for the Florida Prepaid College Program.
- **HB 851:** allows students who attend secondary school in Florida for at least three years prior to graduation to qualify for in-state tuition, regardless of their immigration status. The law also rolls back the ability of state universities to increase tuition without the approval of the Legislature.
- **HB 313:** establishes a pilot program that would lead to some public elementary-school students being separated into boys-only and girls-only classes.
- **SB 224:** bans the sales of electronic cigarettes to minors, similar to bans on sales of cigarettes and other tobacco products.
- **HB 5203:** creates the Florida Consortium of National Cancer Institute Centers Program at the Department of Health to distribute about \$60 million a year to cancer centers.
- **HB 709:** requires the Division of Emergency Management to develop a shelter program for people with Alzheimer's and other memory-related diseases.
- **HB 1131:** expands the availability of emergency allergy treatment — epinephrine auto-injectors, emergency medication — to more public place, such as restaurants, sports arenas, theme parks, youth sports leagues and camps.
- **HB 1047:** defines viability as the stage of development when the life of a fetus is sustainable outside the womb via standard medical measures. It would require physicians to conduct exams before performing abortions to determine if fetuses are viable, and if so, abortions generally wouldn't be allowed.
- **HB 424:** prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage or increase rates based on customers owning guns or ammunition.
- **HB 523:** allows tax collectors' offices to handle concealed-weapon license applications.

- **HB 525:** expands a public-records exemption that shields the identities of people who apply for and receive concealed-carry licenses from the state.
- **HB 629:** gives consumers more information about what charities are doing with their contributions — especially those that raise large amounts of money. The law bars groups that broke laws in other states from soliciting money in Florida, bans felons from raising money for charity, increases reporting requirements for larger charities and requires information from companies that solicit donations for charities by phone.
- **SB 450:** adds unsolicited text messages to the "Do Not Call" program designed to prevent Floridians from receiving unwanted calls from salespeople.
- **HB 7175:** a wide ranging transportation measure, includes a one year ban on local governments installing new parking meters and time-limit devices along the right-of-way of state roads. The law also authorizes a study to determine if the state can get revenue from such devices installed along state roads.
- **HB 7005:** adds sanitation vehicles and utility service vehicles to the requirements of the Move-Over Act; requires non-school buses to use "reasonable means" to not impede or block traffic when picking up or dropping off passengers; requires the words "Sexual Predator" be marked on the front driver licenses and identification cards of people designated as a sexual predator; and allows judges to order twice-daily breath tests instead of ignition interlock devices for repeat DUI offenders.
- **HB 7091:** a wide-ranging measure that further outlines the duties of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, specifies that food permits are not transferable to a different location or owner and authorizes the state agency to close a food facility if the department finds it poses an immediate danger or threat to public health.
- **HB 609:** sets a framework for how Florida would select delegates to an Article V Constitutional Convention.
- **SB 522 and SB 524:** require notification of the county sheriff when a sexual offender is released from the Civil Commitment Center; and require colleges and universities to notify students when a sexual predator is on campus. Two related bills — SB 526 and SB 528 — go into effect Oct. 1. Those bills increase sentences for adult-on-minor sex offenses and registration requirements for sex offenders.
- **SB 102:** the Aaron Cohen Act, increases penalties for drivers who leave the scenes of serious accidents. Cohen, a 36-year-old bicyclist, was killed in a 2012 hit-and-run accident in Miami-Dade County.
- **HB 227:** allows James Joseph Richardson, 78, to finally receive a \$1.2 million payment for the 21 years he wrongly served in prison after his seven children died of poisoning.
- **HB 955:** allows a person required to take a safety course due to a boating violation to do so online, and specifies that those who must take the course because they were convicted of operating a vessel after consuming alcohol under the age of 21 must take the course at their own expense.
- **HB 977:** is intended to help foster children get driver's licenses and auto insurance by requiring the Department of Children and Families to contract with a non-profit organization that will set up a

three-year statewide pilot program to help children in the foster-care system take driver's education courses and get licenses and insurance.

- **HB 7055:** creates criminal penalties for abusing or neglecting teens of all ages in the Department of Juvenile Justice's custody and requires DJJ to provide the Legislature with annual reports on its programs.

- **HB 7141:** directs the Department of Children and Families to inspect and certify "safe houses," where victims can find shelter and services, and establishes services in parts of the state where none exist. Another measure (HB 989) that increases criminal penalties when children are victims of trafficking takes effect Oct. 1.

- **HB 1065:** establishes guidelines for suspending licenses or denying applications and sets up background screening for people involved with massage establishments.