

EMPLOYER ADVOCATE

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LEGISLATIVE

1993 Legislative Outlook

The 1992 organizational session marked a time of change for Florida.

In November, 66 freshman legislators arrived in the capital city—41 percent of the entire Legislature. Nineteen of those 66 were freshman senators who had a hand in making history: For the first time in Florida, the Senate Democrats and Republicans battled for leadership with a 20-20 deadlock.

The result of two days of negotiations was an agreement of shared power and two presidents, each with a one-year tenure.

Sen. Ander Crenshaw (R-Jacksonville) got first bat at Senate president, and is the first Republican Senate president in 118 years. Sen. Pat Thomas (D-Quincy), although second at the plate, will take advantage of the underlying power inherent to a president designate.

When legislators return to Tallahassee on Feb. 2, 1993, many of the issues they will address are ones their predecessors agonized over during the first six months of 1992. Among the most controversial



Legislators got a quick taste of what's in store for 1993 during the organizational session in November 1992.

are the governor's tax proposals and predicted budget shortfalls, health care reform and environmental issues including solid waste management and an advance disposal fee program.

The Budget

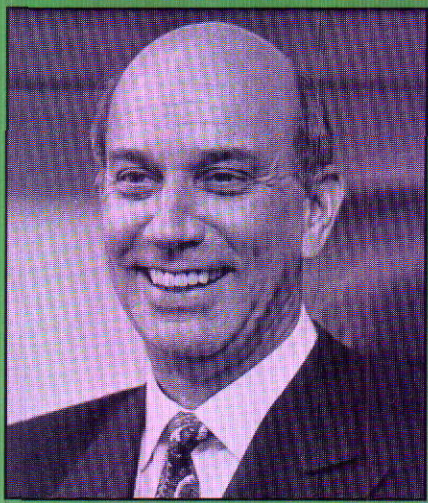
On Dec. 17, 1992, Gov. Lawton Chiles detailed his Smart Dollar Budget for the 1993-94 fiscal year. The governor's proposal included \$630.7 million in new general revenue to be raised by repealing sales tax exemptions on professional services, such as lawyers and accountants, and

automatically increasing the state cigarette and alcoholic beverage taxes according to the consumer price index. The governor, after losing his battle to conservative legislators and industry for \$1.35 billion in increased general revenue in 1992, is making an attempt to win about half that amount (\$630 million) this session while reviving the bitter services-tax debate.

Health Care Reform

Due to emphasis on health care reform during the pres-
Please see Session, page 3.

President's Message



The Will Of The People

by Jon L. Shebel, President and Chief Executive Officer, Associated Industries of Florida

The first impression is strong. This year's group of legislators have already displayed an independence of mind and a willingness to attack the issues.

This new trend began last year when the House Republican freshmen drafted a budget in response to Gov. Lawton Chiles' Fair Share Budget. Usually, freshman legislators are advised to go slow in their first term and to follow the lead of the "seasoned professionals."

These freshmen challenged the system and developed a budget that calculated state revenues and then allocated them based on priorities.

Sounds like good fiscal policy, doesn't it? In the capital city, it was revolutionary. While the Priority Budget was criticized for certain technical errors, it made an impression here that we can only hope is lasting.

The new leaders of both chambers, Senate President Ander Crenshaw (R-Jacksonville) and House Speaker Bo Johnson (D-Milton), are faced with the task of building consensus among traditional opponents.

The House is divided into camps of rural and urban representatives. In the upper chamber, a 20-20 split between the GOP and the Democrats creates the opportunity for thoughtful negotiation or ongoing gridlock. My knowledge of both men convinces me they have the courage and integrity to conquer factionalism without bargaining away the interests of the state.

Now that you've heard the good news; the last round of elections brought to light a serious flaw in our campaign structure.

Two years ago, the Legislature passed a campaign reform law, with Chiles leading the charge. The law set a \$500 cap on contributions, by corporations, political action committees and individuals, to individual campaigns for each election.

The law, however, allowed a loophole that made the fat cats purr with contentment. The act set no limit on contributions to political parties, and while it restricted the parties to contributions of \$50,000, certain types of party assistance such as polling services, research, technical assistance and voter mobilization efforts were excluded from the ceiling.

It is now clear those exemptions were freely exploited. A look at the contribution reports filed by the parties reveals the extent of the problem. The Republican report came in on time, was detailed and generally tallied with the accounts filed by the candidates.

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, held their report until the day of the election. By doing so, they risked some heavy penalties, but managed to postpone some justifiable criticism that could have hurt their candidates.

In only five of 40 races did the Democratic Party's record of contributions tally with those filed by the candidates. In fact, the reports of 15 Democrats showed party contributions ranging from \$50,000 to \$94,000 not listed in the party's report. In some cases, Democratic candidates pulled in more money from the party than from all other contributors combined. For instance, one Democratic challenger who

defeated a Republican incumbent enjoyed a \$94,000 subsidy from her party. Donations from her other supporters totaled \$42,856.

AIF does not judge candidates' campaigns based on party affiliation, however; we judge them on who they are as people and how well they represent their constituents.

There is one group of people who reap the biggest rewards under this system: the campaign consultants. Insiders call them "dirt diggers," "rip-off artists," "mud

merchants" or "slime slingers"; this year's elections granted them a financial bonanza.

Many of their so-called services slide through the loopholes in the current law. Some candidates have complained of losing control over

their campaigns once the party sends consultants in. All told, it's a situation that doesn't serve the state's best interests.

The new House Minority Leader, Rep. Sandra Mortham (R-Largo), has announced a reform bill to plug the gaps in the current law. Her package of proposals addresses fair campaign practices, campaign-finance reform and election administration.

Here at AIF, we intend to stay on top of this issue. Past sessions have been dominated by an entrenched network of power embedded in the leadership and party bosses. A certain lethargy, devoted to preserving the status quo, reigned in the Capitol. Too many members focused their attention on garnering the biggest offices, the most prestigious committee assignments and the security of tenure.

Based on the observations of a number of veteran business lobbyists during the organizational and special sessions and committee meetings that have taken place since the election, House and Senate members have shifted their attention to the needs and demands of their constituents, which is only right. The will of the people put them in office. Once there, the will of the people and the welfare of the state should be their only guide.

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