

Florida House abruptly calls it quits

By **Mitch Perry** - Apr 28, 2015



Shortly after 1 p.m. this afternoon in the Florida House, Speaker Steve Crisafulli stunned observers when he announced that the House would be breaking early, three days before the legislative session's scheduled conclusion, because of the continued impasse with the Florida Senate regarding Medicaid expansion.

"No, we didn't get everything we wanted," Steve Crisafulli told his members. "And we won't get everything we hoped for, but we have done all we can do for this session."

Crisafulli said he doesn't see a need to keep House members in town in hopes of negotiating a budget. The House and Senate exchanged healthcare appropriations offers late last week and the House offered the Senate an additional \$600 million to back off its position that Medicaid be expanded to 800,000 working and low-income Floridians. But the Senate didn't back off its position.

"So having accomplished all that we can do it's time for us to go home," said Crisafulli, who added that it's his belief that a "recess, and a clean slate, is the best way for us to accomplish this goal."

Crisafulli made clear the he did not believe that the House's move to sine die killed legislation.

House Minority leader Mark Pafford was critical of the abrupt move.

"Walking away from your responsibility is questionable. We are here to work," said Pafford, adding that "with the Legislature there is not a whole lot of shock this year. It has been off kilter from the beginning. We stand ready to come back here and talk about Medicaid. Clearly, that is what is being set up at this point. And that will be the issue."

Pafford later issued a statement, where he said that, "I respect the speaker's decision as his

own to make, but I surely am ready to do the job I was sent here to do. It's clear Gov. Scott has shown zero leadership and has only served to make things worse. I hope Speaker Crisafulli and President Gardiner will work together to come up with a special session call that represents the interests of the people of Florida. We don't need Gov. Scott, never elected by a majority, to set the agenda for our Legislature."

Afterwards, Speaker Crisafulli issued his own statement, in which he praised his body for the legislation they did pass this session.

"Together, the Florida House passed bills to cut taxes by \$690 million, create a comprehensive water policy bill, establish a transparent structure for Amendment 1 funding, reduce student testing while maintaining accountability (signed into law), lower tuition, strengthen families by promoting adoptions (on the Governor's desk), and secure pathways to economic independence for persons with disabilities. I firmly believe that each of these bills will greatly benefit Floridians."

And he added that despite differences on Medicaid expansion, "It is noteworthy that the House and Senate appear to have found common ground on long contentious issues such as PSC reform, ALF reform, comprehensive Department of Corrections reform, mental health reform, and Grandparents' Rights (sent to the Governor)."

Florida Democratic Party Chair Allison Tant also blasted the House move, saying, "House Republicans have given up on Florida's families, and put partisan point-scoring ahead of doing what's right for the people who elected them. The House GOP's obsession with denying working Floridians health care no matter the cost is too high a price for Floridians to pay. The House GOP was so unwilling to even discuss expanding access to health care, they have now abandoned priorities essential to all Floridians, from environmental protections to expanding the right to vote and helping kids with special needs."

No word from Senate President Andy Gardiner, as that body is continuing its work through at least the rest of the day, apparently.

The Legislature will need to convene after Friday to come to terms on a budget agreement, which by law must be passed by June 30.

(With additional reporting from Christine Sexton and James Call)