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Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers Highlight Filing of 2021 Priority Legislation

SB 838 and HB 903 address pathways to begin fixing the system that funds Clerk services

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, the Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) highlighted the filing of SB 838 by Sen. Jim Boyd and HB 903 by Rep. Webster Barnaby containing the [At Your Service 2021 Clerk Legislative Priorities](#). This legislation includes creative solutions to begin to address Clerks’ long-standing budget issues that have worsened due to declines in funding from fees, fines and court costs.

“Florida’s Clerks of Court and Comptrollers continue to face an unsustainable funding system that has resulted in statewide budgets lower than the budget from 15 years ago,” **said The Honorable Tara S. Green, Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller, and 2020-2021 FCCC President.** “To stabilize and improve this system and ensure the services we provide are accessible to Floridians, we developed thoughtful legislation, and look forward to working with the Legislature on these solutions. We thank Senator Boyd and Representative Barnaby for their support and the filing of our service stabilization bill.”

“Clerks of Court and Comptrollers make up a large, essential piece of our court system, and throughout the pandemic they remained vigilant to ensure their services were available to residents,” **said Sen. Jim Boyd.** “I am proud to sponsor the Clerks of the Circuit Court bill this Session. I look forward to working with Representative Barnaby to help these public officers begin improving a funding system that was negatively impacted by COVID-19.”

“Florida’s Clerk of Court provide many necessary and essential services to our state. I’m excited to move forward with this legislation that proposes commonsense, practical solutions for longstanding issues that have been present for our great Clerks across the state,” **said Rep. Webster Barnaby.**

Unlike many government entities, Clerks’ offices operate on a cash basis month-to-month, depending on fines, fees, and court costs to fund critical public services. There are many services and activities that have no associated fees or revenue – such as domestic violence injunctions and indigency cases. As Florida’s population has grown, funding for Clerks’ offices has decreased sharply due to instability of revenue generated in the fines-and-fees-based system.

Clerks are not funded in the General Appropriations Act and by law are not allowed to carry statewide reserves to help with emergencies. COVID-19 further exposed the flawed funding system, with Clerks’ offices across the state seeing severe budget reductions from July 2020 to September 2020 that averaged nearly 50 percent.

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The Clerks' *At Your Service* priorities captured in SB 838 and HB 903 address a few key solutions:

- Better stability by authorizing Clerks to carry responsible, statewide reserves to help plan for emergencies, such as COVID-19.
- Improved procedures that allow Clerks to submit funding requests for deficits and services that fall outside normal revenue streams and carry forward revenues from year to year.
- More payment options to encourage timely fulfillment of financial obligations and help reduce driver license suspensions.

The proposed legislation does not include any new funding sources.

For more information about the *At Your Service Clerk 2021 Legislative Priorities*, please visit www.FLClerks.com/AtYourService.

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Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) is a statewide, nonprofit member association composed of Florida's Clerks of the Circuit Court and Comptrollers. FCCC provides local government support services, technical assistance and accreditation opportunities for all members of the association. For more information, visit www.flclerks.com.