

Rick Scott: 'Raising Tuition on Families is a Tax Increase'

By **KEVIN DERBY** - 12.01.20



With the **Florida Board of Governors** considering raising tuition on state universities, **U.S. Sen. Rick Scott**, R-Fla., stressed his opposition to the idea, portraying it as a tax increase.

At the end of last week, the *Orlando Sentinel* reported that tuition could be increasing as schools across the Sunshine State continue to face lower revenue levels during the coronavirus pandemic.

New Senate President Wilton Simpson, R-Spring Hill, said he was open to backing the first tuition increase since 2013 as the state grapples with trying to make up \$2.7 billion.

"We want to make sure that we maintain a very high level of higher education, but at the same time we have kids that are in and out of foster care because we don't have resources to be able to manage that system," Simpson told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "So when you start putting priorities together, I'm going to have a higher priority to make sure we're taking care of those most vulnerable children, and we haven't raised tuition in this state in 10 years."

But Scott, the new chairman of the **National Republican Senate Committee (NRSC)** and a possible presidential candidate in 2024, came out swinging on Monday, showcasing his record as governor.

"As governor, Senator Scott fought to hold the line on tuition by vetoing tuition increases, eliminating automatic inflationary tuition increases, freezing tuition, greatly limiting tuition differential, and appointing leaders who share his goal of providing an affordable higher education to Florida students and families. He also worked to pass several constitutional amendments that make it harder to raise taxes and fees, including requiring 2/3rds of the legislature to vote on a tax or fee increase for it to become law, and requiring a supermajority vote of the State Board of Governors to impose, raise or authorize university fees. As senator, he is working to keep higher education affordable and make sure students are prepared to get good-paying jobs," Scott's office insisted.

"Raising tuition on families is a tax increase. And, it's a tax increase that harms Floridians' ability to achieve the American dream of earning a higher education diploma. As families are still struggling to recover from the coronavirus, leaders in Florida should absolutely not consider raising tuition," Scott said before pointing to his record in Tallahassee.

"Over the last six years of my term as governor, we held the line on tuition. I asked every person interviewing for appointments to our universities and colleges if they would support a tuition increase. If they said yes, I didn't appoint them. And if they went against their word, they were not re-appointed. The federal government has spent almost \$14 billion in the CARES Act to give higher education institutions the support they need during the coronavirus, and with more classes moving online, university operations costs should be lower. Businesses and families around the country are having to navigate this difficult time – our universities have to do the same and live within their means instead of taking the easy way out and passing the costs on to students. The opportunities and dreams of future graduates are at stake, and we owe it to them to continue our fight against the tax

increase of rising tuition," Scott said.

The Legislature will start its regular session in March.

Reach Kevin Derby at kevin.derby@floridadaily.com.
