

Gov. Scott and Speaker Corcoran continue their battle over the Lottery

By **James Williams** - March 6, 2017



Gov. Scott gets a start on the Florida Legislative season battling Speaker Corcoran

There is a big time showdown between new Florida House Speaker Richard Corcoran and Gov. Rick Scott's administration is heading to court.

A Leon County judge will consider today whether the Florida Lottery broke the law when it approved a contract worth over \$700 million.

Corcoran sued the state's lottery secretary last month, arguing the contract with IGT Global Solutions to run lottery games is illegal because it exceeds the Florida Lottery's authorized

budget.

Attorneys representing the lottery say the agency followed the law because the contract states that it is contingent on state funding.

The Florida House budget director is among the witnesses scheduled to testify Monday.

Since becoming speaker in November, Corcoran has sparred with Scott over the state's tourism marketing and economic development agencies. In response, Scott's political committee labeled Corcoran a "career politician."

Gov. Scott, the "jobs, jobs, jobs" politician in the middle of his second term, and House Speaker Corcoran, a GOP firebrand who's turned the capital city establishment upside down, have engaged in a public war in advance of the 2017 session that kicks off Tuesday.

"I'm doing this 44 year. This is as adversarial as I think I remember ever seeing it," veteran lobbyist Ron Book said in a recent interview.

The duel between Scott and Corcoran is rooted in state spending on economic incentives and tourism marketing, issues the governor — first elected in 2010 as a Tallahassee outsider — has established as a cornerstone of his legislative agenda this year.

Gov. Scott is pushing for \$85 million for Enterprise Florida for business incentives and \$76 million for Visit Florida. Corcoran opposes the funding and has gone so far as to back abolishing the public-private agencies, though the House has offered a bill that would keep alive Visit Florida with changes and leave a question mark about funding.

Gov. Scott has taken the unprecedented approach — at least for nearly four decades — of targeting, with robo-calls and speeches Republican lawmakers who've crossed him.

"I'm never going to understand politicians," Gov. Scott said Monday in an interview with The News Service of Florida from Washington, where the governor's schedule included a private visit with President Donald Trump.

“As I go around the state and explain how House members are voting, their constituents are shocked,” Gov. Scott continued. “I look at this as we’ve got a whole bunch of politicians in Tallahassee that, I don’t know why they do what they do. I know how I was brought up. I know that I’ve revamped both Visit Florida and Enterprise Florida. I know I’ve brought in leadership that is focused on doing the right thing. So my job is to keep doing what I got elected to do. I can never understand why somebody would take the position they are taking.”

Along with his attack on Enterprise Florida and Visit Florida, Corcoran has upset the Tallahassee establishment with what he calls an effort to shine a light on relationships between lobbyists and lawmakers.

And he’s alienated not only the lobbying corps and the governor but Senate leaders by changing the House’s budget process regarding local projects, sometimes called “turkeys.”

Corcoran, a Land O’ Lakes Republican, characterizes Gov. Scott’s sought-after tax incentives as “corporate welfare” undeserving of money from working-class Floridians.

“What we’re saying, from a House standpoint is these are our principles. We’ve laid them out for you guys over and over and over. These are our principles. This is what we believe. This is our philosophy. And we’re going to govern according to that philosophy. That’s what we’re going to do,” Corcoran said in a recent interview.

Corcoran, a lawyer, recently credited Scott with hiring him after what the speaker referred to as a crushing defeat in a state Senate race years ago. He blamed the antipathy between the two leaders on perception, rather than reality.

Quotes used in the story came from ASSOCIATED PRESS and CNN

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Jim Williams is the Washington Bureau Chief, Digital Director as well as the Director of Special Projects for

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