

FOR APRIL 19, 2001

Workers' Compensation

In last night's report, we gave credit to the House Council for Competitive Commerce for amending HB 1927 to address key problems related to the workers' compensation system. Listed were abuse, fraud, and delays in the system and limiting attorneys' fees. We stated that the bill, as originally passed out of the House Insurance Committee, did not address these issues until amended by the Council. This was incorrect. *The House Insurance Committee, Chaired by Rep. Leslie Waters (R-Largo) bill did provide limitations on the attorneys' fees, which AIF supported and continues to support.* We apologize for this error.

Budget Negotiations

The House and Senate have yet to meet to negotiate their differences between their two respective budgets for the 2001 – 2001 fiscal year. Speaker Feeney (R-Oviedo) is insisting the final budget agreement include roughly \$300 million in tax cuts. Senate President John McKay is insisting the Senate budget contain no budget cuts. He did allow earlier today that provision may be made for \$49 million in tax cuts, but even that has been cast in doubt. Later today the Senate President suggested that the numbers for implementing the quality of care reforms for nursing home care have climbed and he indicated that even the \$49 million might be off the table.

Florida Constitution

In reaction to last year's voter approval of the high speed rail constitutional amendment, the House Procedural and Redistricting Council approved unanimously a proposed constitutional amendment, HJR 571 by Rep. Randy Johnson (R-Winter Park), to require economic impact statements to accompany proposed constitutional amendments on the ballot. Voters approved creation of the rail system without being informed that the actual cost of the system defies concrete estimate and will run the billions of dollars.

While AIF took no position on this proposed and eventually adopted amendment to the constitution, we find it very troublesome that amendments can be adopted by the voters with little or no accurate background information provided. The high-speed rail amendment has a potentially enormous impact on the state's budget and, by extension,

Florida's business community. An idea simply "sounding good," is a poor basis for amending the state's constitution. The voters need to get the facts on what the potential economic impact may be of a proposed amendment to our state's most sacred civil document.

This report was prepared by Curt Leonard, Manager – Governmental Affairs at Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) and Jere Moore, AIF Reporter. Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850)224-7173.

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