

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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**FROM SPECIAL SESSION 'D'
FOR APRIL 2, 2002**

EDUCATING THE MASSES

At the call of the Governor, the Legislature reconvened today in Special Session to consider a rewrite of the statutes governing Florida's education system.

As we have previously reported, the Legislature failed to adopt a new "school code" during the Regular Session. The House and Senate disagreed on some issues involved in the bill and appointed a conference committee to work out the differences on the final day of the session. The conference committee bill or report was not taken up and passed by the Senate Friday evening, March 22, which was a great disappointment to the House.

Presumably, when the House and Senate have a conference committee report, which represents an agreement between representative members of both the House and the Senate, it is a "no brainer" for the Legislature to come back and simply take up the conference report as a new special session bill, pass it, and go home. But, that would be too easy, wouldn't it?

The House did their part today, doing just that. They took up a bill, which is identical to the conference committee report hammered out two weeks ago and after some debate over amendments that all failed adoption - passed it. The Senate met today briefly, and did not debate a new version of the conference report. They instead adjourned so the Senate Education Committee could meet and ponder amendments to the conference report. In addition, certain members of the Senate made it clear that they would be offering more amendments to the bill tomorrow on the floor.

The House feels like it made some real painful sacrifices in agreeing to the conference committee product two weeks ago. And now the Senate wishes to further play around with the education bill. As a result, the House, in addition to "re-sending" the agreed upon bill of a couple weeks ago, has opted to take up their original, unabridged education bill. The Council on Lifelong Learning will be meeting tomorrow to consider further tweaking to their bill that represents their convictions on education policy issues apart from any compromises with the Senate. Speaker Tom Feeney (R-Oviedo) remarked to the House that they wanted to be in the position of having a bill that reflected their priorities if the Senate chooses not to cooperate with the conference committee bill.

The hoped for scenario is that the Senate will take up the House bill tomorrow, amend it without doing great violence to prior agreements and send it back for House concurrence. There is the possibility that the Senate will amend the bill into a form unacceptable to the House. In that case, the wheels will come off and the Legislature will be essentially starting back at square one on the whole process. Whether or not a "deal breaker" with the House includes Senate President John McKay's stated wish to adopt legislation that renames roads and public buildings is unknown at this time.

The school code needs to be readopted and rewritten to embrace and reflect all the reforms that have taken place during the last several years, including the Education Governance reforms that unified the state's K-12, community colleges and state university system into a unified whole. The bill under current consideration is over 1800 pages long and the Legislature has taken to distributing the bill by computer disc.

Stay tuned to our daily brief and to our web site at www.fbnnet.com as the legislature makes some very important decisions on the state's economy. These decisions will have a major impact on the business community and AIF will be reporting to you everything that happens.

This report was prepared by Curt Leonard, Manager – Governmental Affairs at Associated Industries of Florida (AIF). 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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