



FROM APRIL 29, 2003

BUDGET DELIBERATIONS COLLAPSE

Late this afternoon, Senate President Jim King (R-Jacksonville) announced that budget negotiations had stopped and the Legislature would likely return in about a month to complete the budget within a special session. Insisting on the need to stand by principles, King said that the Senate would be required to make excessive compromises in order to agree with the House position. Senator King also noted that many members and staff were exhausted and should return afresh to work out the budget stalemate.

In response, House Speaker Johnnie Byrd (R-Plant City) stated that the House was also disinclined to abandon its principles. Therefore, he said, "this may be a good time to stop and take pause." The Senate president and House speaker both pledged to continue working on other pending bills during the final three days of the regular session.

TAXATION

Today, the streamlined sales-and-use-tax bill, SB 1776, co-sponsored by the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance & Taxation committees and Senator Evelyn Lynn (R-Ormond Beach), was read a second time and no amendments were added. The streamlined sales tax project is an effort created by several state governments, with input from municipalities and the private sector, to simplify and modernize sales-and-use-tax collection and administration. The project proposes that participating states conform their tax laws to a simplification method that would apply to all sellers.

AIF believes that the State of Florida could equalize the treatment of all retail vendors regarding the assessment and collection of state sales-and-use tax if a uniform, national collection system were developed. Furthermore, the state treasury would benefit since the use tax, currently levied but not collected on catalog and Internet sales, would be remitted to the state treasury.

WATER RESOURCES

HB 279, sponsored by Representative Larry Cretul (R-Ocala), was laid on the table and substituted with CS/SB 1044, sponsored by Senator Nancy Argenziano (R-Crystal River). CS/SB 1044, which passed the Senate yesterday on a unanimous vote, relates to the issuance of water-use and impoundment-construction permits. This bill requires that a notice be provided by regular or electronic mail to certain local governments. A permit must also include language stating that it does not convey any property rights or privileges other than those specified within the permit. After CS/SB 1044 was read a second and third time it passed with a 118 to 0 vote.

As originally written, AIF opposed SB 1044 because it would make the permitting process more cumbersome by erecting barriers that strangle economic development in this state. As amended, AIF supports this legislation.

IDENTITY THEFT & INTERNET FRAUD

Today, SB 1580, sponsored by Senator Dave Aronberg (D-Ft. Myers) and relating to identity theft and fraud, was read a second time and an amendment was adopted. SB 1580 expands Florida laws regarding the misrepresentation with intent to deceive another person, unfair trade practice, and obtaining personal information for commercial solicitation. It also sets into law the criminal penalties for identity theft.

Identity theft and Internet fraud cost businesses in Florida hundreds of millions of dollars a year. AIF supports legislation that will protect consumers and businesses by promoting prevention and prosecution of these crimes without imposing wasteful or punitive burdens on business.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

CS/CS/SB 1172, which relates to proposed revisions of the state constitution, was read a second time today. This bill, by Senator Anna Cowin (R-Leesburg), restricts any proposed amendment or revision to the state constitution from being placed on the ballot unless the Florida Supreme Court determines that it meets the certain criteria.

AIF supports measures that strengthen the integrity of the constitutional amendment process. The people retain the ultimate right to alter or revise the state constitution in accordance with fundamental precepts of democratic rule.

Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850)224-7173.

- For more information on all of the important legislative information concerning the business community, go to our "members only" Florida Business Network web site at <http://fbnet.com>
- Send us your E-mail address and we will begin to send this report to you automatically via E-mail.