

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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FROM AUGUST 12, 2003

The first order of business on day one of the Special Session D was a Democratic Caucus meeting, followed by media availability with the minority party leaders of both chambers. While distancing themselves from the two bills, HB 1D and SB 2D, the Democrats have refrained from making an open and united declaration of opposition.

At an afternoon meeting, the Senate Health, Aging and Long-Term Care Committee took testimony prior to voting on a series of amendments intended to conform the Senate bill to its House companion. The bill was voted out by 9 yeas to 0 nays and it will next head to the Senate floor.

The House Select Committee on Medical Liability Insurance workshop on HB 1D was a livelier affair with members asking the committee chair, Representative Dudley Goodlette (R-Naples), and his co-negotiator, Representative Allan Bense (R-Panama City), a series of thoughtful questions about the bill's operational details. Despite some concerns about certain provisions, the committee members were overwhelmingly supportive of the work done by Representatives Goodlette and Bense, and their counterparts, Senators Rod Smith (D-Gainesville) and Tom Lee (R-Brandon).

It is clear that the majority of members recognize that the medical-liability legislation before them represents the product of tough negotiation and honest compromise. While the bill does not represent an ideal solution for anyone, it is a real political accomplishment that will definitely mark an improvement over the existing litigation climate, insurance market, and patient protections.

All indications are that everyone hopes to get a medical malpractice bill passed quickly, allowing lawmakers to evacuate the state Capitol, perhaps as soon as late on Wednesday. Some doubt persists as to whether the Senate rules will allow passage of the bill by Wednesday, but regardless, no one is anticipating that the special session will last until its scheduled conclusion on Friday.

One bit of news was made during the day. In the morning session, Senate President Jim King (R-Jacksonville) announced that he would be canceling September's committee meetings in order to give members a break from the long summer of special sessions. He did warn that they might have to double up in October, however, when he anticipates the governor will call the Legislature back into another special session to address bills relating to water, phosphate mining, and other issues.

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