

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
INTERIM BRIEF**



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WEEKLY INTERIM LEGISLATIVE BRIEF FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 6-10, 2003
SOURCE: ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA

Today ended the first full week of committee meetings held by the 2003 Florida Legislature. We watched as the House and Senate began laying the groundwork for the upcoming 2003 Session. As always, AIF will provide you with a Weekly review highlighting all the main activities of the past week.

The Joint Health Care Summit concluded their meeting today with a presentation by Edward Salsberg, from the Center for Workforce Studies. He stated that ten percent of the population works in health care and many professions including nurses and doctors are in short supply across the country. He advised the Legislature to keep solutions broad and not focus on one provider because you do not know which providers will be in short supply tomorrow. He also cautioned against prohibitions on mandatory overtime and mandated staffing ratios. Dr. Agwunobi, the Florida Secretary of Health, stated that because Florida is so diverse, there are regional causes of shortages that have to be addressed. He stated that mandatory nursing home staffing ratios have strained the supply of Certified Nurse Assistants and he is concerned about the rising average age of our nurses.

Barbara Safriet, Associate Dean at the Yale University School of Law, stated that the interstate and intrastate variance in scope of practices is wasting resources and impeding new technologies, such as telemedicine. The Legislature needs look beyond raw political power of interest groups and increase coordination between the practitioners' legal authority and clinical ability.

Senate President King closed by saying that this information will serve as a base for this Legislature to address medical malpractice issues and ways to increase efficiency.

Highlights from this past week include the following Committee Meetings:

On Monday, the Senate Select Committee on Constitutional Amendment Implementation held its first meeting. Monday's meeting was dedicated to providing legislative committee staff time to precisely brief the Committee on every letter and verb tense of these constitutional amendments and the statutory implementation they are now enjoined to perform. Also on Monday, the Senate Select Committee on Automobile Insurance/PIP Reform. We will be watching this issue closely. PIP fraud and abuse and its effect on insurance rates are a significant cost-driver to Florida's business community and it is a problem that unmistakably needs to be addressed in the 2003 Regular Session. The Joint Select Committee on Nursing Homes held its first meeting taking testimony from the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Department of Insurance on the health of nursing homes and the status of SB 1202 reforms. Overall, the facts presented by the regulators supported further action by the Legislature and the Committee members spoke like it would work to develop legislation.

Tuesday was dominated by the inauguration of Governor Jeb Bush, Lt. Governor Frank Brogan and the subsequent inaugural celebration. Also on Tuesday, the Senate Commerce, Economic Opportunities, and Consumer Services Committee welcomed President & CEO of Enterprise Florida, Inc., J. Darrell Kelley, today. Mr. Kelley was asked to brief the Committee on Enterprise Florida's current status, its goals and prospects for the immediate future in recruiting and growing business in Florida.

Wednesday found the Senate Education Committee & the Class Size Amendment meeting and focusing on the presentations by the Senate staff regarding Amendment 9 to the Florida Constitution approved by the voters in November's elections. The Committee was provided with facts and statistics of what has to occur to accomplish class size reduction. The changes must begin this year to reach the final goal in 2010. They went over the total number of additional schools which must be built and the total number of additional teachers which must be hired. It was pointed out that the Committee must also take into consideration the continuing growth of Florida's population and not to base their operating assumptions simply on the current statistics. Also on Wednesday, the House Finance & Tax Committee provided members with an overview of Florida tax structure, the Committee's jurisdiction and its guiding principles. The guiding principles for the Committee are the following:

- Protect Florida 's Families – what effect will a tax proposal have on Florida 's average working family?
- Promote Economic Development – does the proposal lead to growing Florida 's economy by creating an environment favorable to high paying jobs?
- Provide Fairness – does the proposal treat all taxpayers in a similar situation in an equitable manner?

Wednesday also found the House Insurance Committee holding its first interim committee meeting. Chairman Kim Berfield (R-Clearwater) outlined the four priority areas that the committee will consider during the upcoming legislative session as worker's compensation, medical liability insurance, PIP, and health care accessibility and financing. Chairman Berfield expressed a committee goal to develop global solutions for the problems with which they are presented, rather than adopt a band-aid or quick fix. On the issue of worker's compensation, Chairman Berfield informed the committee members that this issue was still under review by the Governor's Commission for Worker's Compensation Reform. The Commission is required to have a report by January 31, 2003 . The Banking and Insurance Committee heard testimony from Chief Financial Officer, Tom Gallagher, updating the transition of the Department of Banking and Finance and the Department of Insurance under the direction of the newly created Department of Financial Services and the Financial Services Commission. The Committee also received the reports of staff members on two interim projects relating to public records exemptions in worker's compensation.

On Thursday, the Florida Legislature began its two-day Joint Health Care Summit on the House Floor this morning. The Summit highlighted the following topics:

- Framework for Policy Analysis
- Health Care Cost Pressures and Financing Fundamentals
- Understanding Medicaid
- Medical Liability Insurance Overview
- Healthcare Workforce Shortages
- Turf Wars: Understanding Workforce Licensure and Scope of Practice Issues

House Speaker Johnnie Byrd (R-Plant City) opened the Summit by telling Legislators to use the Summit 's information to help determine which aspects of health care should be given back to consumers and the private sector. Senate President King (R-Jacksonville) stated that 36% of the budget is health and human services issues. He advised Legislators to "think outside the box."

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://fbnnet.com>
- Send us your E-mail address and we will begin to send this report to you automatically via E-mail.