

# LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY UPDATE



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## AIF WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE BRIEF JANUARY 13-17, 2003

The Legislature spent this week focused on the **budget** and how it can make up for several billion dollars in revenue shortfall. Since \$12 billion in spending falls under the Agency for Health Care Administration, it has received much attention. The House is starting with a zero growth assumption and going line by line through the budget determining which programs can be cut or reduced. Some committee members also want to reduce paperwork and other regulatory requirements on health care providers to increase efficiency in the delivery of services.

Some proposals discussed in the Senate were: restoration of some dental services for Medicaid recipients; greater emphasis on nursing home diversion; getting regulators to focus fraud efforts on criminals and limit “audits and surveys” of innocent providers.

The Agency for Health Care Administration testified that Medicaid only pays 57 percent of the Medicare fee to physicians providing Medicaid services. This has resulted in a severe shortage of specialists in the program. The Agency is proposing to attract more providers by attempting to draw down more federal funds through the Upper Payment program, which would allow Medicaid to pay providers the Medicare rate.

House Speaker Johnnie Byrd (R-Plant City) announced the creation of the **Select Committee on Workers’ Compensation**. Speaker Johnnie Byrd stated that Florida’s businesses are finding workers’ compensation insurance unaffordable and/or unattainable. He has instructed the committee to address the issues of measures to: improve availability and affordability of workers’ compensation insurance; reduce fraud; assure that benefits for injured workers are adequate and equitable; and streamline the administration of the system. The committee will be chaired by Representative Dennis Ross (R-Lakeland) and the Vice Chair is Representative Don Brown (R-DeFuniak Springs). The following Representatives make up the rest of the committee: Nancy Detert (R-Venice); Jim Kallinger (R-Winter Park); Terry Fields (D-Jacksonville); Carl Domino (R-Palm Beach Gardens); Pat Patterson (R-Deland); Baxter Troutman (R-Winter Haven); and Bob Henriquez (D-Tampa).

The **Governors Task Force on Healthcare Professional Liability Insurance** approved a series of additional recommendations, including a \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages in medical malpractice cases. The report is due to the Legislature the end of January.

Next week will be busy with a full agenda of the House and Senate committees meeting.

Stay tuned to our daily brief and to our web site at [www.fbnnet.com](http://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.

Please send your comments or suggestions to us at [aif@aif.com](mailto: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.