

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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HEALTH CARE

Today on the Senate floor, SB 2910 relating to Affordable Health Care by Senator Durell Peaden (R-Crestview) was substituted by its House companion, HB 1629, sponsored by Representative Frank Farkas (R-St. Petersburg). This is the health insurance package which came about as a result of the Governor's Task Force on Access to Affordable Health Insurance and the House Select Committee on Affordable Health Care hearings that were held across the state earlier this year. The bill addresses a number of health care issues and expands the Patients Bill of Rights to include: provide access to health care facility data including charge estimates, creating the Florida Health Insurance Plan (a high risk pool for uninsurable medical risks), expanding the Health Flex Programs statewide, and addressing issues of patient safety. It is expected that the Senate will take a final vote on this legislation tomorrow.

AIF supports legislation that allows employers to provide or expand access to high-quality, affordable health benefits for their employees without additional government intrusion or expensive mandates. Programs such as Health Flex provide a way to address the health care needs of Florida's working poor.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REFORM

SB 1700 relating to constitutional amendments was presented for its second reading in the Senate by Senator Anna Cowin (R-Leesburg). This bill requires the Secretary of State to submit certain proposed constitutional amendments to a Financial Impact Estimating Conference. It requires the Attorney General to immediately petition the Supreme Court for a review of certain financial impact statements and also requires this same Estimating Conference to produce a financial information statement and summary. SB 1700 prescribes the placement of the financial impact statement on the election ballot as well.

The bill passed and moved on to its third reading but not without some concern from members. Senator Ron Klein (D-Delray Beach) wanted to know why the financial impact statements were only required for *citizen's* initiatives and why they were not trying to add this policy to *legislative* initiatives as well. Senator Klein felt it was just as important for the voters to know the legislative fiscal initiative impact as well as the impact of citizen's initiatives. Senator Cowin did not disagree, but stated that the bill could not include this language because the Constitution would have to be amended to allow for it.

Its House companion, HB 1743, has been placed on the special order calendar and should be heard this week.

AIF supports politically viable initiative reforms aimed at facilitating a more responsible process and at protecting the sanctity and supremacy of the state's Constitution.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 1174 by Senator Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton) was read a second time today, and it is expected that a vote will be taken by the full Senate tomorrow. This bill began as an attempt to amend the burdensome DRI (Development of Regional Impact) process. In order to bring the business community, government, and the environmental community together, Senator Bennett filed SB 1174 and had all sides work on a product that would become good public policy. Since all sides could not agree on a program for the DRI process, the sponsor has amended his bill to create a study commission which will consist of appointees by the Governor, Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate. The appointees must include representatives from the business community (including development and real estate), agriculture, local governments, environmental and citizen organizations. The Commission is required to provide a report to the Governor, House Speaker and Senate President by January 1, 2006 on growth management and the DRI process.

Two new amendments were adopted today. The first amendment increased the number of Senate and House appointees to the study commission to two members from each chamber. The second amendment removed previous language which would have appropriated \$300,000 for the study commission's organization and funding.

AIF supports legislation that cuts red tape, streamlines the permitting process, and keeps the cost reasonable for developments that bring responsible growth, infrastructure, and the goods and services that come with it.

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.