



DAILY LEGISLATIVE BRIEF FROM MARCH 10, 2008

Today was a quiet day at the Capitol, as the only substantive committee that met was the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee. The joint committee of House and Senate members took up a review of several of the water management districts' policies and procedures. Under the Government Accountability Act, the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee is tasked with overseeing the sunset review process, conducting public hearings, and providing technical assistance to both the Speaker and Senate President. The Joint Committee also makes recommendations to the Legislature as to whether the agency or advisory board should continue, and facilitates the legislative process relating to Sunset bills.

AIF has a busy slate of committee meetings starting tomorrow, as the Senate and House hold their regularly scheduled meetings.

Sunset Review

Today, the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee met to continue its review process of state agencies. The main topic of the day pertained to Florida's water management districts and a revision of their policies and procedures. According to OPPAGA, the Legislature's main policy analysis office, "Florida's water management districts manage and protect the state's water resources and related natural systems. The districts are responsible for water supply, water quality, flood protection, and natural systems." Because of their critical role in water policy, water management districts play an incredibly important role in shaping Florida's business climate.

The first proposal considered by the committee was to amend the fiscal calendar year for the water management districts. Currently, their fiscal year is different from all other state agencies. The Sunset Committee debated a proposal, which would have aligned the water management districts fiscal year with all other agencies. After much debate, the proposal failed. Representatives from the water management districts were able to persuade committee members that they would not have enough time or information to put together their budgets under the typical fiscal year.

The committee then considered the issue of having either elected or appointed water management districts board members. Currently, board members in the five water management districts are appointed by the Governor and then confirmed by the Senate.

Senator Rhonda Storms (R-Brandon) proposed that all water management board members be elected rather than appointed. She cited that this should be the duty of an elected official to serve, rather than that of one appointed. Ultimately, Senator Storms' proposal was not adopted.

Representative Kevin Ambler (R-Tampa), Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee, then introduced a hybrid proposal of both appointed and elected board members. Representative Ambler's proposal was temporarily passed, as the Committee was running out of time.

The Committee will revisit Representative Ambler proposal next week when its members convene again for its final scheduled meeting.

AIF opposes the concept of electing water management district board members because of the level of expertise that comes with appointed members. This expertise puts our water resources in the hands of qualified individuals, who will make the best decisions for citizens and businesses in Florida.