



# DAILY BRIEF

From January 8, 2009

On the eve of the BCS National Championship Game, legislators found themselves in Tallahassee debating the proposed cuts to the state budget. The House of Representatives was in Session Thursday afternoon holding the preliminary round of questions and debate on the various appropriations bills needed to cut \$2.3 billion from the budget. Leaders from both parties did agree however on a time limit for questions and debate – perhaps in anticipation of the big game tonight. As expected the majority of the debate revolved around sweeps of the budget stabilization fund and the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund. Members of the minority party questioned the logic of borrowing additional dollars from these funds, especially the budget stabilization fund which must be paid back according to law.

Representative Marcelo Llorente (R-Miami), Chairman of the Full Appropriations Council on General Government & Health Care explained that their hope was to replenish the budget stabilization fund with dollars from the Chiles Fund or from possible federal stimulus dollars.

Other proposals that caused debate included cuts to VISIT Florida, the state entity responsible for the marketing of Florida as a tourist destination and the proposed sweeps of the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the Transportation Trust Fund. Representative Ron Saunders (D-Tavernier), a former House appropriations chair, brought specific attention to the housing issue which he has championed for quite some time. Representative Rich Glorioso (R-Plant City) explained that as it relates to affordable housing his priority was to help fund down payment assistance, not additional construction of housing projects.

Two bills of particular interest to the business community were also quickly brought up and rolled over to third reading, meaning that they are ready to be voted on. HB 5107A Relating to State Judicial System would allow for an increase in court fees and traffic fines for the purpose of funding the state's court system. HB 5201A Relating to Economic Development, utilizes \$10 million to create a direct loan pilot program coupled with a technical assistance loan program to allow eligible businesses the ability to receive up to a \$250,000 loan to be repaid over a 7 year period with certain interest parameters attached to the loan. The bill requires that the recipient continue to meet certain job creation goals in order to qualify for the loan. **Associated Industries of Florida supports both of these proposals.**

The Senate will begin their first round of debate on Friday and the House is expected to pass their versions of the appropriation bills on Friday as well.