



DAILY BRIEF

From March 15, 2010

Today was another relatively quiet Monday in Tallahassee with very few committees meeting. Monday's highlight was a meeting of the House Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning, Chaired by House Speaker-Designate Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park). The committee spent nearly three hours listening to two presentations related to the potential opening up of Florida's territorial waters to oil and natural gas exploration. The first presentation was given by representatives from the Collins Center on their recently released report to the Century Commission entitled "Potential Impacts of Oil & Gas Exploration in the Gulf." This comprehensive report was drafted in response to a request from Senate President Jeff Atwater (R-North Palm Beach) for additional research on this contentious issue.

Although the report does not come to a pro-drilling or anti-drilling conclusion, it does answer a number of very valid questions regarding the proposal to drill in Florida waters including the safety of drilling; the impact on the state budget and jobs; as well as the effects drilling on the Gulf could have on military operations in Florida. Council members asked a number of questions associated with these topics. Representative Seth McKeel (R-Lakeland) inquired about the recent oil spill in the Timor Sea and whether there could be a risk of this type of spill in Gulf. **Dr. Frank Alcock**, representing the Collins Center, replied that while the rig in the Timor Sea was of similar technology to what could be used in the Gulf - the staff operating this rig did not have nearly the experience and technical skills of crews currently working in the Gulf.

The Collins Center presentation was followed by a presentation by **Amy Baker**, the state's chief economist, who walked Council members through what an auction process could look like if Florida was to allow for exploration and drilling in the Gulf. Ms. Baker outlined a number of different scenarios plus the pros and cons of using them and provided Council members with some of her recommendations as to how to proceed with an auction of leases for drilling.

AIF SUPPORTS the passage of legislation that establishes a process by which the state of Florida can begin considering proposals for offshore drilling in state territorial waters. Allowing environmentally-sensitive access to these resources is not only in our national interest as a mean of improving energy security, it also can serve as an important and much-needed method for generating new state revenues and jobs for the state of Florida.

Also, don't miss this week's episode of AIFTV which features an interview with Senator Mike Haridopolos (R-Melbourne) – sponsor of the dynamic scoring bill (SB 1178). This week's episode also features important information on tort reform bills moving through the process as well as a preview of week three in the Legislature.