



# DAILY BRIEF

**From March 22, 2013**

While the Senate was inactive today, the House was busy at work debating various pieces of legislation. Health care and pension reform proved to be the most controversial topics of the day while environment and agriculture legislation passed through unopposed. The House version of campaign finance reform passed and multiple education bills were also debated and passed.

---

## **Health Care**

The House Health & Human Services Committee approved HB 625, *Relating to Physicians Assistants*, by Representative Doc Renuart (R-Ponte Vedra Beach) which would expand the scope of practice for Physician Assistants (PA) serving Floridians. The bill would authorize a supervisory physician to delegate to a PA the authority to order medications for a patient during the patient's care in a hospital, ambulatory surgical center, or mobile surgical facility. Additionally, the bill would allow a PA to order any medication under the direction of the supervisory physician while working in the previously named facilities.

The bill is now ready to head to the House floor. The Senate companion, SB 398 by Senator Aaron Bean (R-Jacksonville) and is waiting to be heard in the Senate Committee on Judiciary.

The House unanimously approved HB 239, *Relating to Practice of Optometry*, by Representative Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres) which would expand the scope of practice for optometrists. Specifically, the bill would allow optometrists to prescribe 14 oral medications for their patients. For analgesic and anti-glaucoma medications, a physician "skilled in the disease of the eye" must be consulted. Further, optometrists will be subject to additional training and exams to have this authority.

The bill will now head to the Senate. Earlier in the week, the same language was approved on the Senate companion, SB 278 by Senator Garrett Richter (R-Naples), in the Senate Committee on Appropriations. It is now ready for the Senate floor.

**AIF supports expanding the scope of practice for health care professionals in order to increase access to services and lower the cost of care.**

---

## **Pension Reform**

Today HB 7011, *Relating to Retirement*, was read for a third time on the House Floor. The bill, which would significantly change the state retirement system by requiring all new state employees to enroll in a 401k style investment plan, was thoroughly debated by Democrats in favor of retaining a pension option for state workers and Republicans trying to reduce the long term risk to tax payers.

AIF has consistently supported this bill as it moves the state retirement system toward a private sector model reduces the long term financial risk to tax payers and finally will result in a more stable budget environment for the state, which translates into more stable business environment.

The bill passed by a vote of 74-42 and will move on to the Senate.

**AIF supports legislation reducing the burden Florida's taxpayers are shouldering, due to these state and local government pension plans, by closing the current pension program.**

---

## Insurance

Yesterday, the Senate Appropriations Chairman, Joe Negron (R-Stuart), announced the Senate will consider eliminating premium tax credits insurance companies receive based on the aggregate salaries of their Florida employees. The salary credit was implemented in 1987 to provide an incentive for insurance companies to increase jobs in the state by locating home offices, regional service centers, and call centers in the state. The credit is an important tool in marketing Florida and in competing with other states for insurance industry jobs. The \$220 million of additional revenue resulting from the elimination of the credit will be used by the Legislature to reduce annual vehicle registration fees.

Chair Negron's proposal will be formally presented in coming days as proposed committee bill (PCB).

**While AIF supports reducing registration fees, we oppose the elimination of the credit which could have the unintended consequences of reducing jobs in Florida and making Florida less competitive for insurance companies' jobs.**

---

## Environment & Agriculture

HB 7065, *Relating to Everglades Long-term Plan*, by Representative Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres) was heard before the full House. Among other things, the legislation provides legislative finding that implementation of best management practices (BMPs), funded by the owners and users of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), effectively reduces nutrients in waters flowing into the Everglades Protection Area. AIF agrees fully with this position. To date, in their continued commitment to the Everglades, farmers and landowners in the region have spent \$200 million on BMPs. The legislation also does not raise the current \$25 per acre Agricultural Privilege Tax that farmers and landowners pay the state. The legislation also moves towards completing the Everglades Restoration plan.

The bill passed by a vote of 114-0 and will next be heard by the Senate.

**AIF supports legislation necessary to authorize funding, to begin implementing the revised \$880 million State Everglades Restoration Plan that Florida has already committed to complete. AIF opposes any increases in the Agricultural Privilege Tax and supports the inclusion of provisions in the legislation that requires the appropriate state agency to conduct a Use Attainability Analysis at the completion of construction projects to determine if the nutrient limits are attainable.**

The House Local & Federal Affairs Committee met this morning and covered two bills of concern to the business community.

HB 203, *Relating to Agricultural Lands*, by Representative Halsey Beshears (R-Monticello) prohibits municipalities from adopting any duplicative ordinance, resolution, regulation, rule, or policy that limits activity of a bona fide farm operation if the activity is already regulated. Activity can be regulated through a Best Management Practice (BMP), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS), Water Management District (WMD), or similar agency. Florida counties already have to comply with this law.

AIF stood in support and the committee passed the bill by a unanimous vote.

**AIF supports legislation eliminating duplicative duties by other governmental agencies as it eliminates an unnecessary tax burden on Florida's employers.**

In the same committee, AIF stood in support of HB 415, *Relating to Brownfields*, by Representative Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast). The bill revises the provisions for designating Brownfields and other criteria that must be satisfied. It also provides relief from liability for property damages and other provisions.

The committee passed the bill by a vote of 8-5 and will next be heard in the House Economic Affairs Committee.

**AIF supports any legislation promoting Florida's Brownfield Program as it provides a variety of financial and regulatory incentives encouraging parties to voluntarily clean up and redevelop Brownfield sites. By restoring Brownfield sites, the properties get back on the tax rolls quicker and become useful to the community.**

---

## Education

Today in the House Education Committee, AIF stood in support of HB 21 *Relating to Background Screening for Noninstructional Contractors on School Grounds*, by Representative Keith Perry (R-Gainesville). The legislation would require the Department of Education to create a uniform, statewide identification badge to be worn by non-instructional contractors signifying that a contractor has met specified requirements and background checks.

The bill passed by a vote of 16-0 and will next be heard by the full House.

**AIF supports this legislation because it streamlines and makes uniform the ID requirements for non-instructional contractors working on school grounds.**

In the same committee, AIF stood in support of HB 7009, *Relating to Charter Schools*, by the House Choice & Innovation Subcommittee and Representative George R. Moraitis, Jr. (R-Ft. Lauderdale). The bill removes caps on charter schools, creates a standard model contract, improves collaboration with school district during the application process and encourages school districts to allow charter schools to use district schools that are no longer in use.

The bill passed by a vote of 12-6 and has not yet been calendared for a third committee reference.

**AIF supports removing artificial enrollment caps that prevent charter schools from meeting the demand of students on waiting lists.**

The Committee also heard HB 867, *Relating to Parent Empowerment in Education*, otherwise known as the “parent trigger bill,” by Representative Carlos Trujillo (R-Doral). The bill enables parents, by petition, to request that the school district implement a parent-selected turnaround option if a school earns a grade of “F”. The turnaround option requested by parents must be considered for implementation by the district school board at a publicly noticed meeting if the petition is signed and dated by a majority of the parents of eligible students.

The bill passed along party lines and will next be heard on the House floor.

**Currently, AIF does not have a position on the bill, but will be monitoring it as it directly pertains to Florida’s future workforce.**

---

## **Ethics & Elections**

During Session, the House passed HB 569, *Relating to Florida Election Code*, by Representative Rob Schenck (R-Springhill) by a 75-39 vote along party lines. This bill is a significant revision on the laws regulating campaign finances in Florida.

Most of the debate was focused on a provision of the bill that allows successful candidates to carry up to \$20,000 in surplus campaign funds forward to apply to their next race for the same office. Democrats unsuccessfully decried the provision as “incumbency protection.” There was also debate over the provisions of the bill that raise the limits on campaign contributions from \$500 for all offices to \$5,000 for statewide races and \$3,000 for all other candidates. There was a broad bipartisan consensus, though, in favor of the area of the bill that abolishes committees of continuous existence (CCE).

The House bill is now substantially the same as its Senate counterpart, SB 1382, *Relating to Campaign Finance*, by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater), except in the area of increased limitations on contributions. The Senate bill raises the limits for statewide candidates from \$500 to \$3,000 but leaves them at \$500 for all other candidates.

Earlier in the day, **Governor Rick Scott** had urged the House to consider returning the contribution limits to their current \$500 level unless and until strong justifications are presented to justify the higher limits.

SB 1382 will be heard by the Senate Committee on Appropriations on Thursday, March 28th.

**AIF will monitor all proposals related to public ethics and elections and advocate as necessary to protect the rights of individuals and businesses.**