



DAILY BRIEF

From April 29, 2013

Workers' Compensation

In the House Health & Human Services Committee, **AIF's General Counsel, Tamela Perdue** stood in support of HB 605, *Relating to Workers' Compensation*, by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples). HB 605 would clarify the maximum costs for prescription medications that physicians are allowed to charge to workers' compensation patients. If successful, this legislation would help restore balance and integrity to Florida's workers' compensation system, and the purpose for which it was created.



AIF's Perdue said, "With this important clarification to Florida law this year, employers will no longer be forced to pay excessive markups on prescription drugs that exceed the standard reimbursement rates for the same medications dispensed by pharmacies. With the legislature's continued support, this legislation will help provide injured workers with the care they need without imposing indefinite, unwarranted costs to employers."

HB 605 will next be heard on the House floor. The Senate companion bill, SB 662 by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) was unanimously passed by the Senate later in the day. It will also be heard on the House floor next.

AIF recognized the urgent need for significant reform to Florida's workers' compensation system and formed the Workers' Compensation Coalition of Business and Insurance Industry to educate lawmakers about the nature of the system, its potential for failure or success, and to develop viable solutions that would reduce fraud, lower rates and create a healthy workers' compensation market. The Workers' Compensation Coalition, and its more than 60 members, has spearheaded the most recent workers' compensation reforms of 2003, which have resulted in remarkable savings for employers, decreased time away from work for employees, and improved enforcement of the laws governing the workers' compensation system.

Health Care

The Senate unanimously passed SB 1844, *Relating to Health Choice Plus Program*, by Senator Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach). The bill creates the Health Choice Plus (HCP) program which would be an alternative health benefits program for uninsured, low income Floridians with incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) who meet certain eligibility criteria. Enrollees would be required to contribute at least \$20 a month to their account and the state would provide \$10 a month to each account which will be managed by Florida Health Choices (FHC). Funds from the state will be available only to the extent they are appropriated annually. Enrollees may use the funds in the accounts to purchase a range of health care products from the FHC online marketplace or to pay for other out of pocket health care costs.

If approved, the bill would take effect on July 1, 2013 and would be subject to automatic repeal on July 1, 2016, unless reenacted by the Legislature. The estimated funding for the program for the first year is \$15 million from General Revenue. No federal dollars are used for this program.

The bill will next be heard by the House.

Read more on SB 1844...

AIF supports another Senate health care proposal, SB 1816, by Senator Joe Negrón (R-Palm City). SB 1816 is the only proposal addressing the inordinate hidden tax that Florida employers pay to cover the cost of care provided to uninsured Floridians. AIF strongly urges the Legislature to continue its focus on developing sound health care reform that will alleviate this financial encumbrance by best leveraging available federal funds to safeguard Florida's future economic success.

Economic Development

The House unanimously passed HB 879, *Relating to Freight Logistic Zones*, by Representative Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville). The bill creates the state's first Freight Logistic Zones meant to aid logistical gains between distribution assets and the state's freight traffic. This legislation would allow a local government to apply to the Department of Transportation (DOT) for a designated freight logistics zone. The local government must submit an application that includes, but is not limited to:

- A map showing the geographic area or areas included in the designation;
- Identification of existing transportation infrastructure;
- Workforce availability;
- Workforce training for a business looking to relocate; and
- Plans including transportation movement and identification of financial or other local government incentives.

HB 879 has been previously amended to remove the language referencing the secretary of transportation may designate up to four pilot freight logistics zones in the state consulting with the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). Instead, the amendment inserted new language stating that projects within freight logistics zones must be consistent with the Freight Mobility and Trade Plan to be eligible for priority in state funding and incentive programs relating to freight logistics zones.

The bill will next be heard by the Senate before it can be signed into law.

AIF supports this legislation as it will help advance Florida business' investment in intermodal logistics.

Environment & Agriculture

The House unanimously passed HB 1193, *Relating to Taxation of Property*, by Representative Halsey Beshears (R-Monticello). The bill would amend the agriculture "Greenbelt" law to delete some portions that are very dated. The bill also addresses issues in the value adjustment boards process, deletes requirement that a property appraiser reclassify certain non-agriculture lands that have that have been zoned as non-agriculture.

Later in the day, the Senate took up the Senate companion bill, SB 1200 by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-New Port Richey) where HB 1193 was substituted for the bill and unanimously passed.

HB 1193 will now be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.

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.

State Contracts

The Senate passed HB 1309, *Relating to Procurement of Commodities and Contractual Services*, by Representative Ben Albritton (R-Bartow). A strike-all amendment was introduced to replace HB 1309 with its companion, SB 1150 by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto (R-Ft. Myers). As amended, the bill revises provisions relating to state agency contracting and related duties of the Department of Management Services (DMS), and creates new duties for the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in the state agency contracting process. The bill:

- Deletes a requirement that the DMS maintain a vendor list;
- Deletes contract documentation requirements for specified agreements;
- Requires that invitations to bid must be awarded to the responsible and responsive vendor who submits the lowest responsive bid;
- Deletes a requirement that agencies seek approval of the DMS for single source purchases;
- Requires that specified accountability provisions be included in grant agreements; · Requires certified grant managers on grant agreements valued over \$35,000;
- Permits the CFO to audit grant agreements before execution, and requires the CFO audit of grant agreements after execution;
- Permits the CFO to audit certain agency contracts before execution, and requires a CFO audit of certain agency contracts after execution;
- Requires that every contract of more than \$100,000 must have a certified contract manager; and
- Specifies the types of information that agencies must make available on the contract tracking system.

The bill will be bounced back to the House to be made identical to the Senate bill.

AIF has some concerns with the legislation that we hope to address when the bill is again heard in the House. Overall the legislation improves the procurement process which is vital to the business community.