



WEEKLY BRIEF

From the Week of March 5 – 8, 2013

Tuesday, March 5th, saw the official start 2013 Legislative Session here in Tallahassee, which is slated to run for 60 days. The health care discussion is far from the only buzz at the Florida Capital as Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) has been working closely with policymakers to continue Florida's return to economic prosperity.

On Monday, March 4th, the Republican Caucus held a ceremony to formally nominate Representative Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island) to serve as Speaker of the Florida House for the 2014-2016 legislative term. AIF congratulates Speaker Designate Crisafulli and looks forward to working with him in the future.

Also on Monday, Governor Rick Scott addressed AIF's Manufacturing Aerospace and Defense (MAD) Council meeting in Tallahassee. As the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), AIF is committed to providing a member venue to discuss and advance the interests of Florida's manufacturing community. In addition to Governor Scott's discussion on manufacturing, council members were briefed in simulation, space and defense by General Tom Baptiste, President of the National Center for Simulation, Frank DiBello, President of Space Florida, and Tom Feeney, President & CEO of AIF.

On Wednesday, March 6th, agriculture and education joined health care as primary topics of the day while insurance, economic development, legal and judicial, and telecommunications issues were also covered.

On Thursday, March 7th, a number of important bills saw action in both the House and Senate. To name a few, Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) supported legislation in the areas of environmental sustainability, health care, workforce, transportation and others passed by their respective committees.

Health Care

Last week Governor Rick Scott announced he supports accepting Federal funding to expand Medicaid to help cover uninsured Floridians. Governor Scott stated he will expand coverage for the three years that Federal funding is available to Florida. Gov. Scott would then want a full evaluation of the program to determine if it was good policy for Florida.

Tuesday, AIF President & CEO, Tom Feeney, stated "Governor Scott has proposed an option to relieve the double taxation on Florida's employers, while also providing coverage for more of our state's uninsured. AIF stands ready to work with the Florida Legislature and the Governor to accomplish these critical objectives for the benefit of all Floridians."

AIF will encourage the Legislature to best utilize available federal funding to provide coverage to more Floridians in a manner that best safeguards Florida's citizens and protects the State's financial health.

On Monday, March 4th, the House and Senate Select Committees on PPACA met jointly to receive more data on the effect of expanding the state's Medicaid Program. Amy Baker, coordinator of the Legislative Office of Economic and Demographic Research, gave updated cost projections which generally noted that taking federal funds that come with expanding the program would be helpful to the State of Florida and Florida employers. Specifically, Baker noted that the state would forfeit between \$6 and \$12 billion a year for the next ten years if the Legislature chooses not to expand eligibility in the program.

AIF told members the cost of treating the uninsured is a \$1.3 billion "hidden tax" on Florida's employers. "The business community is already paying for the uninsured, in the most costly setting possible, in the emergency rooms," said AIF. As a result, AIF is encouraging legislators to "best leverage available federal funding to ensure that we provide coverage to Floridians in a manner that protects the state's financial health."

Following the cost discussions, Sen. Joe Negron (R-Palm City), Chair of the Senate Select PPACA Committee took the suggestion by his fellow Senate committee members and postponed the Senate Committee's afternoon meeting. However, he indicated that he may support expansion. "Medicaid expansion may or may not be a good idea, but it would be better to have 7 percent of Floridians uninsured than 21 percent", said Sen. Negron.

The postponement of the Senate Committee's meeting allowed for the House Select PPACA Committee to take the first stand on this issue. Following a rigorous discussion, the committee voted 10 to 5 in favor of a motion made by Rep. Matt Hudson (R-Naples), Chair of the House Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee. The motion was to "not instruct committee staff to prepare a proposal to expand Medicaid". The Senate committee is next scheduled to meet Monday, March 11th, and the House Select Committee is scheduled to meet Friday, March 15th.

In the House Insurance and Banking Subcommittee HB 675 by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola), was unanimously approved. **AIF's General Counsel, Tammy Perdue**, supported the bill during the committee meeting. The bill would repeal the requirement on health insurers to submit the marketing materials they will use for their health insurance products, prior to their use. The bill would allow health insurers to get their products into the market sooner. The bill will now head to the Health Innovation Subcommittee, scheduled to meet Wednesday, March 13th. The Senate companion, SB 648 by Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange), has not yet been heard.



AIF supports streamlining the regulations that create unnecessary barriers to ensure employers have options for coverage from which to choose.

On Wednesday, March 6th, the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs unanimously approved SB 794 by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). The bill would allow an applicant in need of nursing home care, to name the State of Florida as the beneficiary of their life insurance policy. As a trade-off, the person would be eligible for nursing home services through the Medicaid program. The state would be allowed to recover some of the costs of providing that costly care through the person's life insurance policy. A result, this measure would increase the affordability of nursing home care. The House companion, HB 535 by Representative Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City), has not yet been heard.

AIF supports measures to make health care services more affordable while increasing access to those services.

On Thursday, March 7th, AIF stood in support of Senate Bill 536, *Relating to Physical Therapy*, by Senator Nancy Detert (R-Venice) at the Health Policy Committee this morning. The bill would allow Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs) to authorize a physical therapist to implement a

treatment plan for a patient. The bill passed unanimously and will now head to the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 14th. AIF also stood in support of the House companion, HB 413 by Representative, which was approved later today in the House Health and Human Services Committee and is now ready to be heard by the full House.

Later in the day, AIF supported a bill in the Health and Human Services Committee that was later approved. HB 239 by Representative Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres) passed with only two dissenting votes. A strike all amendment was approved which represents a compromise developed between those groups representing optometrists and ophthalmologists. The bill would allow an optometrist who, has taken additional coursework and has passed an examination, to administer and prescribe ocular pharmaceutical agents in pill form. Currently an optometrist is only permitted to administer and prescribe topical ocular pharmaceutical agents.

AIF also supported CS/SB 278 by Senator Garrett Richter (R-Naples) in the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee. The bill would allow certified optometrists who complete additional coursework and pass an examination to provide a broader range of services including administering and prescribing oral pharmaceutical agents. For the last several years, optometrists have sought to increase their scope of practice, noting they can provide additional services for patients at a lower cost. The committee's staff analysis stated passage of this bill would result in savings for the state's Medicaid program. The bill passed the committee by a vote of 10 to 3 and will head next to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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

Business & Economic Development

On Monday, March 4th, SB 446 by Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange) was amended and passed Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee today by a vote of 10 to 1, with Senator Margolis as the only no vote. The bill requires an applicant to provide a surety bond (or alternative form of collateral) to the Department of Economic Opportunity before the applicant receives incentive awards through the Quick Action Closing Fund or the Innovation Incentive Program. The bill has two remaining committee stops before it is ready to be heard on the floor.

Also on Monday, March 4th, SB 140 by Senator Oscar Braynon (D-Miami Gardens) passed the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee unanimously today. The bill defines the term "car-sharing service" and exempts the provision of vehicles to individuals by entities meeting the definition from the rental car surcharge. Senators Aaron Bean (R-Jacksonville) and Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) both expressed a concern that this change could create an uneven playing field with traditional rental car companies and result in a loss of revenue to the state. Sen. Braynon committed to working with the Senators to ensure their concerns are addressed. The bill has two remaining committee stops.

On Tuesday, March 5th, the House Transportation Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee passed HB 7007 which will serve as the House of Representatives' 2013 economic development package. Presented by Rep. Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City), HB 7007 would set in place regular reporting mechanisms of state economic incentive activities, and require reports be given to the Legislature throughout the year. This would enable legislative policy makers to assess the effectiveness of state incentives and ensure state resources are being appropriately utilized for economic growth and activities. The legislation will also grant rulemaking authority to the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) that would help the state with more flexible procedures related to the administration

of the Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant, a federally funded program administered by the state since 1983. HB 7007 also extends the penalties for individuals collecting reemployment benefits fraudulently and assigns the Governor as a non-voting ex-officio member of Visit Florida Board of Directors.

Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) supports the state's economic development agency, DEO, in its mission to extend economic opportunity and activity across Florida. Member companies of AIF have served as a voice and resource for Florida in recent years as the state has redefined its economic incentive activities. Leading the nation in sustainable job growth is the goal Governor Scott and AIF.

On Wednesday, March 6th, the House Economic Development & Tourism Subcommittee met to hear several bills of importance to AIF and the business community. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support of HB 515, *Relating to New Markets Development Program*, by Representative Jose Oliva (R-Hialeah). The legislation authorizes another round of incentives under the successful New Markets Development Program, which has been encouraging economic development in our state's low-income communities since 2010. The bill passed the committee unanimously. The legislation will next be heard in House Finance and Tax Subcommittee, scheduled to meet Friday, March 8th.



AIF supports Florida's continued participation in the New Markets Development Program as it has created or retained over 1,400 jobs and is anticipated to create 8,000 jobs by 2016.

On the same day, Mr. Bevis also stood in support of HB 537, *Relating to Growth Management*, by Representative George Moraitis (R-Ft. Lauderdale). The legislation will foster business growth by removing barriers amending the referendum process for development orders, local comprehensive plan amendments and map amendments. The bill passed the committee unanimously and will be heard next in the House Local & Federal Affairs Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 7th.

AIF supports legislation removing any barriers to business in an effort to create a more business-friendly climate in Florida.

On Thursday, March 7th, AIF stood in support of SB 562, *Relation to Tax-exempt Income*, by Senator Dorothy Hukill, (R-Port Orange) in the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee. Senator Hukill said this bill increases the level of income that is exempt from the Florida corporate income tax. Florida imposes a 5.5 percent tax on the net income of corporations doing business in Florida. Currently, however, the first \$50,000 of a corporation's income that is subject to Florida tax is exempted from the tax. This bill increases the exemption from \$50,000 to \$75,000. The bill passed unanimously and moves to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Finance and Tax, scheduled to meet Wednesday, March 13th.

AIF supports the increase to \$75,000 of tax exempt income as promoted by Governor Rick Scott. This exemption will make Florida more desirable to both existing businesses in Florida and those looking to locate in Florida.

Energy

On Tuesday, March 5th, AIF stood in support of HB 579 by Rep. Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville) dealing with natural gas motor fuel, in the House Subcommittee on Energy & Utilities and the bill was unanimously passed. HB 579 would replace the annual decal and fee system with a motor fuel equivalent gallon form of taxation beginning January 1, 2019. The bill would further require anyone selling natural gas fuel in Florida to obtain a natural gas retailer license from the Department of Revenue. There are currently 32 natural gas fueling stations in Florida and with the development in the United States of proved reserves of natural gas, the potential for a less expensive and cleaner alternative to other motor fuels is expanded in this legislation.

AIF supports any efforts by the Legislature to provide Florida's businesses with a less expensive and cleaner alternative motor fuel and will continue to monitor this legislation.

Ethics & Elections

On Tuesday, March 5th, during the first vote of the 2013 Legislative Session, Senate passed CS/SB 2 by Committee on Ethics and Elections with a vote of 40-0. This bill was described by committee chairman Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater) as "...the most comprehensive ethics package since the Sunshine Amendment was adopted in 1976." The bill is also a major priority of Senate President Don Gaetz (R-Niceville).

Key provisions of the bill accomplish the following:

- Closes the "revolving door" for elected officials who leave office then immediately take lucrative lobbying jobs,
- Prevents elected officials from accepting dual employment with public entities unless the job at issue is filled by an application/competitive hiring process,
- Gives the Ethics Commission broader authority to collect fines from those who violate the ethics laws, and;
- Prevents elected officials from accepting gifts from committees of continuous existence.

The bill now goes to the House for further deliberations. However, its passage in some form is virtually assured given Speaker Weatherford's commitment to passage of ethics legislation this year.

Environment & Agriculture

On Wednesday, March 6th, in the House Economic Development and Tourism Subcommittee, **Brewster Bevis, AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs** stood in support of HB 415, *Relating to Brownfields*, by Representative Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast). If enacted, the legislation would reorganize the statute to provide a clearer description of the Brownfield area designation process. The bill specifies that redeveloping Brownfield areas can be a significant element in other revitalizations areas, such as community redevelopment areas, enterprise zones, and closed military bases. The legislation passed unanimously and will next be heard in House Local & Federal Affairs Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 7th.



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.

On Thursday, March 7th, during the House State Affairs Committee AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis spoke in Support of Proposed Committee Bill (PCB) 1, *Relating to Everglades Improvement and Management*, by Representative Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres). 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, which AIF supports. Bevis stated: "Associated Industries has long advocated for a healthy business environment as well as a healthy natural environment. AIF believes this bill addresses both." The legislation passed with a unanimous vote of 17 yeas and 0 nays. We believe the bill will next be heard in the House Finance and Tax Subcommittee.

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.

On Wednesday, March 6th, AIF waived in support of Senator Alan Hays' (R-Umatilla), 30 year alternative water supply permitting bill, SB 364 in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government. SB 364 expands water supply and reduces the cost of bonding such projects. The bill passed and will continue to the Senate Appropriations Committee, scheduled to meet tomorrow, March 7th.

On the same day, in the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, also stood in support of HB 659, *Relating to Fossil Fuel Combustion Products*, by Representative Tom Goodson (R-Titusville). The legislation would allow for the use of waste from the burning of fossil fuel, primarily coal ash, to be used in road building materials and other beneficial uses. The legislation passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 2 nays. The bill next will be heard in House Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee.

The Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee met Thursday morning to hear Senator Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring) present SB 948, *Relating to Water Supply*. AIF was present in the committee and spoke in support of the bill. This bill authorizes the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to collect water use data from farmers throughout the state and provide it to Florida's water management districts. It also allows the department to create a water supply planning program. All committee members voted in favor of the bill it now moves to the Senate Agriculture Committee, scheduled to meet Monday, March 11th.

The House Committee on State Affairs met to take up HB 109, *Relating to Consumptive Use Permits for Development of Alternative Water Supplies*, by Representative Dana Young (R-Tampa). AIF waived in support of the bill before it passed unanimously. This bill allows a water management district to grant 30 year consumptive use permits for alternative water supply projects. This bill is similar to SB 364 by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) which passed a Senate committee earlier this week. Both are

important because they expand the "water pie" and make financing projects less expensive. These savings can be passed on to consumers and businesses in lower rates.

AIF supports state funding for alternative water supply programs and believes the Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund (WPSTF) must be fully funded so alternative water supply projects, such as reclaimed water projects, desalination efforts and the collection and storage of rainwater, can be built to produce additional and sustainable future water supplies.

Education

On Wednesday, March 6th, The Senate Education Committee heard SB 1076, *Relating to Education*, by Committee Chair John Legg (R-Lutz), a career education legislation that is Senate President Gaetz's (R-Destin) number one education priority. AIF spoke on behalf of the legislation, encouraging members to support and the bill passed 8 to 1. The bill revises current career education programs and target funding in an effort to better prepare and align Florida students to join the workforce. Specifically, the bill would encourage students' development of technology knowledge in prekindergarten through grade 12, thus effectively increasing opportunities in which students earn industry certifications in high school and beyond. It will effectively expand the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) concept, created first in 2007, which jump started the creation of career and professional academies within school districts. Next, SB 1076 heads to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, meeting Wednesday, March 13th.

AIF supports any legislation geared toward preparing Florida's students for a successful transition into the workforce.

On the following day, during the House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee, HB 867, otherwise known as the "Parent Trigger Bill," passed along partisan lines with an 8 to 5 vote. 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.

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

Also on Thursday, March 7th, the House Education Committee brought forth members to report on their visits to early learning coalitions, boards and providers. The committee heard feedback from legislators who held visits to coalitions, boards and providers all around the state. Among the concerns were a need for a quality improvement program, standardized assessments, and a greater need for accountability and uniformity in general.

Chair Marlene O'Toole (R-The Villages) echoed these concerns. She spoke about the importance in making specific improvements to the areas of Governance, Accountability and Transparency. In particular, she commented on attempting to clarify the rules and regulations of the Early Learning Coalitions, clarifying child eligibility requirements, and promoting greater transparency by showing the tax payers of Florida exactly where their money is going.

Before concluding the meeting Chair O'Toole said they would begin to draft some language, and we would see a bill soon. The committee meets again on Thursday, March 14th at 1:30pm.

AIF supports significantly reducing the waiting list of children who seek School Readiness funds and support and equitable funding formula that will provide greater access to effective early learning programs.

Insurance

On Wednesday, March 6th, the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee heard HB 635, *Relating to Insurance*, by Representative Katie Edwards (D-Plantation), which included the adoption of 15 amendments and one withdrawn amendment. This bill includes provisions that allow for electronic proof of automobile insurance cards and to allow insurers to electronically deliver certain insurance policy forms. There was an extended discussion regarding the exemption of medical malpractice from the assessment base of the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund. The exemption provided in current law is set to expire. The bill provided for a permanent exemption but an amendment was adopted that extends the current exemption for another three years.

Also passing the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee was PCS for HB 835 by Representative John Wood (R-Winter Haven) and **PCB IBS 13-1** by Representative Bryan Nelson (R-Apopka), making changes to Citizens Property Insurance Corporation. These changes include the creation of an Inspector General who reports to the Financial Services Commission; precludes Citizens' policyholders from renewing insurance with Citizens if an insurer in the private market will insure the property for a premium up to five percent more than the Citizens renewal premium, and the creation of the Citizens Property Insurance Corporation Clearing Housing which would serve to enforce provisions of current law with regard to Citizens eligibility. If enacted, HB 835 would effectively phase out Citizens coverage of more expensive houses, specifically those costing more than \$500,000.

Early Thursday morning, AIF attended the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee to stand in support of SB 7018, *Relating to Property Insurance*, filed to reform Citizens Property Insurance Corporation.

Many of the provisions of SB 7018 were part of the reform proposal AIF presented to the committee earlier this year. One of the more notable provisions requires Citizens rates must be actuarially sound and noncompetitive with the private market. This should significantly reduce the likelihood of future assessments on non-Citizens policyholders. Other provisions of the bill would limit eligibility of certain high value properties over time. The bill passed with only one dissenting vote.

AIF supports legislation to restore the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (Cat Fund) to a safety buffer for Andrew-sized storms, thereby ensuring it can meet its obligations in the event of a storm and reducing the hurricane taxes funding its operations, as well as its possible deficits. Additionally, AIF supports legislation to return Citizens to an insurer of last resort.

On the same day, the House Civil Justice Subcommittee unanimously approved HB 341, *Relating to Uninsured Motorist Coverage*, by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola). The bill reverses a recent court decision which deleted the option for the purchaser of an automobile insurance policy to sign a waiver of rights to combine policy limits from multiple vehicles for Uninsured Motorists (UM) coverage.

By restoring this option, the bill allows businesses and other purchasers of UM coverage utilizing this option, to save 20% or more in premiums. The bill will next be heard in the House Regulatory Affairs Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 14th.

On Thursday, March 7th, the House Government Operations Appropriations Subcommittee approved CS/HB 335, *Relating to Property and Casualty Insurance Rates and Forms*, by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton). The bill allows a property and casualty insurer to file a new policy or changes to an existing policy as an informational filing with the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) in lieu of filing for approval prior to use. The bill will substantially reduce a backlog of

form filings awaiting approval by the OIR. Thus, the bill will allow insurers to react timely to the insurance needs of the business community and will enhance competition among insurers. Representative Boyd's bill passed unanimously and now heads to its last stop in the House, the Regulatory Affairs Committee on Thursday, March 14th.

AIF supports legislation improving the legal and regulatory environment for insurers while reducing the cost of insurance to businesses.

Legal & Judicial

On Wednesday, March 6th, AIF waived in support of HB 827 by Representative Matt Gaetz (R-Fort Walton Beach), *Relating to Medicine*, as it passed through its first committee of reference, the House Civil Justice Subcommittee, with a party line vote. The bill focuses on reforms within the medical malpractice system, including ex parte or unilateral communication, among other issues. AIF commends Representative Gaetz for carrying bill and will continue to support his efforts as the bill moves through the committee process.

AIF supports legislation sustaining the existing caps on non-economic damages arising from medical malpractice lawsuits. AIF also supports any legislation expanding immunity to health care providers who provide medical attention in certain situations.

The following day, the Senate Committee on Regulated Industries unanimously passed SB 874, *Relating to Open Parties*, by Senator Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton). AIF worked to amend the bill to include clarifying language that the party must be thrown by individuals on the property "lawfully." Hopefully, this amendment will clarify that the intent of the bill is to not punish large commercial landowners already taking steps to prevent trespassers on their property. AIF will continue to work with the House companion sponsor to add the clarifying language amended into the Senate version of the bill. The bill now moves to the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, scheduled to meet Monday, March 11th.

AIF supports legislation aiming to protect large commercial landowners and will continue to work with Legislators on the clarification of language in these bills.

Telecommunications

On Tuesday, March 5th, the Senate Communications, Energy, and Public Utilities Committee Chair Dorothy Hukill, (R-Port Orange) called on Senator Nancy Detert, (R-Venice), to present CS/SB 52, *Use of Wireless Communications Devices*. Senator Detert explained an amendment to provide for an additional 2 points if the violation occurs within a school safety zone. The amendment passed with a unanimous voice vote. Senator Detert then explained the bill prohibits the operation of a motor vehicle while manually typing or entering multiple letters, numbers, symbols, or other text in a handheld wireless device. There were questions from several Senators, all of whom were in support of the bill, but wanted clarification. Senator Detert was prepared for all the questions and gave answers which satisfied each. In debate only supportive comments were offered. Public testimony was simply amazing as over 20 entities waived in support of the bill including the largest wireless provider, AT&T. The bill passed without opposition and heads to the Senate Judiciary Committee, next scheduled to meet Tuesday, March 12th.

On the following day, in the House Transportation & Highway Safety Subcommittee, AIF waived in support of Representative Doug Holder's (R-Sarasota) HB 13, *Relating to the Use of Wireless Communications Devices While Driving*. Representative Holder explained that the bill provides for secondary enforcement of a ban on texting-while-driving. Specifically, a driver must be first pulled over for a violation of another traffic law before that driver may be cited for violating the texting-while-driving ban. He said that graduated penalties and exceptions are provided. A driver may still text when legally parked. The bill also provides that a driver's wireless billing records and testimony from those receiving messages are admissible as evidence in a proceeding to determine whether a violation has been committed. The bill may generate additional revenues for local and state governments as a result of the penalties. The bill passed unanimously as a committee substitute and will be re-referred but most likely will go to House Civil Justice Subcommittee next.

AIF supports SB 52 and HB 13 because both will effectively decrease automobile accidents thus lowering insurance costs for Florida's businesses.

Workforce

Thursday, March 7th, AIF spoke in the House State Affairs Committee in support of HB 655, *Relating to Political Subdivisions*, by Representative Steve Precourt (R-Orlando). HB 655 amends current law to further restrict political subdivisions from requiring an employer to provide employment benefits not required by state or federal law. The bill is designed to block local governments from enacting sick-time rules, such as the one pending in Orange County. This legislation is necessary to avoid what could become a patchwork of wage and benefit rules that may drive businesses away from Florida. The committee adopted one amendment that exempts any living wage ordinance in effect as of July 1, 2013, but then repeals those as of July 1, 2016. The amendment also permanently exempts domestic violence ordinances, orders, rules or policies. HB 655 passed 12-4 and is now headed to the House floor.

On the same day, the Senate Community Affairs Committee was slated to hear SB 726, *Relating to Regulation of Family or Medical Leave Benefits for Employees*, by Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs). The legislation prohibits local governments from passing any mandatory sick leave ordinances, ensuring that we will avoid a scenario where businesses could face 67 different rules and mandates in 67 different counties. However, the bill goes on to mandate employers provide a minimum sick leave policy. AIF is opposed to this mandate. The legislation was temporarily postponed in the committee due to time constraints. The committee is slated to meet next on Thursday, March 14th.

AIF looks forward to working with Senator Simmons on addressing the concerns found within the legislation.

Transportation

On Thursday, March 7th, the Senate Transportation Committee met to hear SB 1132, *Relating to the Department of Transportation*, by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg), an omnibus package serving as the primary legislation for Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) priorities for 2013. The bill includes a variety of issues related to space funding, local government noise mitigation, strategic investment initiatives and other clarifying statutory language revisions. Specifically, the bill will allow the FDOT to allocate funding for space related projects after collaboration with local input and other related industries including Space Florida. In response to Senator Tom Lee (R-Brandon) who questioned whether this was actually an economic development incentive as opposed to a transportation initiative, FDOT

Secretary Ananth Prasad explained that in fact these funds being made available would be limited and come from the public transportation portion of the State Transportation Trust Fund only after careful collaboration and consideration with all state stakeholders.

Additionally, the bill addresses several provisions related to regional transportation authorities, including the creation of the Florida Regional Toll Way Authority Act which would allow counties to form regional tolling authorities that can build and operate transportation projects in a particular region. It also creates three new regional transportation authorities that would be located in Escambia, Okaloosa and Citrus counties as well as moving the transfer of governance for the Mid Bay Bridge Authority to the newly created regional authority in Okaloosa County.

AIF supports any legislation that aides in making long term decisions to enhance the state's future revenue needs for transportation infrastructure investments.

During the 2012 Session, language was approved by the Legislature and signed into law which required visitors from outside the United States to have an International Driving Permit (IDP) to drive lawfully in Florida. These permits can only be obtained in the person's country, not after they enter the United States. The new law caused a stir among the state's tourist industry such as rental car companies, hotels, and attractions because it made Florida look less "tourist friendly." This could have disastrous effects on our economy as our state relies heavily on the dollars spent by tourists. AIF joined the coalition of businesses calling for the repeal of the language.

Yesterday, the House Economic Affairs Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee passed proposals to repeal the onerous language. Both proposals are now ready to head to their respective Chambers, as early as next Tuesday, so the issue can be remedied quickly. The Governor has given his assurance that he will sign the measure as soon as the final bill is presented to him.

AIF supports any legislation repealing this harmful language as it directly damages Florida's businesses relying on tourism.

Information Technology

On Thursday, March 7th, the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Council, Chair Jeremy Ring (D-Margate) introduced his own legislation, SB 7024, *Relating to State Technology*. Senator Ring explained that the bill substantially revises how the state organizes and operates its information technology resources. The bill creates a Department of State Technology (DST) as an executive agency under the Governor. The defunct Agency for Enterprise Information Technology is abolished by the bill, and its duties, and all technology and telecommunications duties of the Department of Management Services, are transferred to the DST. The DST is given extensive authority to set state technology policy, and manage state enterprise IT services and procurements. The Northwood and Southwood shared resource centers are transferred to the DST.

Senator Aaron Bean (R-Jacksonville) asked why it was necessary to create a new agency and hire 14 people. Senator Ring responded that the state was a \$70 billion operation and he did not know of any business of nearly that size that did not have an IT department. We have a poor record of utilizing IT in our business processes in Florida and this is a step toward solving that. He added that this modest expenditure will save the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

AIF testified in support of the bill and thanked Senator Ring for his continued efforts in IT governance. AIF believes this legislation will move Florida forward in its ability to properly utilize IT in producing its many business process much more efficiently.

The bill passed with only dissenting vote. The bill will now become a committee bill with a new number and be re referenced but will not come back to this committee.

AIF's Information Technology Council strongly supports the bill because it allows the state to begin to make informed decisions on its IT spend. Moreover it will improve the efficiency of the state's operations.