



WEEKLY BRIEF

From the Week of March 11 – 15, 2013

During the second week of the 2013 Legislative Session, Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) continued its push forward on the issues of most importance to Florida employers. Among others, week two saw victories for Florida's business community in environment, taxation, education and insurance issues.

Health Care

On Monday, the Senate Committee on Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care (PPACA) voted along party lines *not* to expand eligibility in the state's Medicaid Program. However, following the vote, Chair Joe Negron (R-Stuart) outlined his plan for an alternative plan that would allow low income Floridians to purchase health insurance coverage with premium assistance. Sen. Negron said he hopes to move the plan this session. The components of the program include:

- *Defining a benchmark health insurance plan in which everyone must pay an amount for services.* Sen. Negron noted that the payments, such as co payments and deductibles by low income persons would be based on a sliding scale.
- *Using the Healthy Kids Program as the framework through which persons in this new plan would purchase coverage.* Healthy Kids currently provides health insurance plans to children of low income families. Negron told members that the program saves an average of 4.5% over cost and has worked within an 85% MLR (plans providing services must spend at least 85% on health care services, rather than on administrative services).
- *Requiring the health insurance plan to have a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) component in which participants can be rewarded for healthy behavior.* Patients can build up the funds and use them for co-pays or for uncovered services.

Sen. Negron told committee members that although more research was needed, there may be a way to advance this plan without being required to receive a waiver from the federal government, which was required for the 2011 Medicaid reform plan. Sen. Negron went on to say that he would like to see Florida's use of the traditional Medicaid system replaced by a premium assistance program.

Moving forward, the Select Committee will meet March 18th to discuss in more detail the components of this alternative plan. The House Select Committee is scheduled to meet on Friday March 15th.

Recently, Governor Rick Scott noted he would support expansion of the Medicaid program with a few caveats. Last week, Speaker Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) noted he did not support expansion in his speech on the opening day of session.

AIF encourages legislators to best leverage available federal funding to ensure Floridians have coverage in a manner that protects the state's financial health and helps employers avoid a possible \$1.3 billion hidden tax for uncompensated care for thousands of Floridians not qualifying for private health care or Medicaid.

On Tuesday, in the House Health Quality Subcommittee, AIF stood in support of HB 625 by Representative Ronald Renuart (R-Ponte Vedra Beach) which clarifies the services physician assistants (PAs) are authorized to execute. Specifically the bill clarifies that PAs can order medications for a supervisory physician's patient in a hospital, ambulatory surgical center, or mobile surgical facility. AIF stood in support of the bill.

The bill will now head to the House Rulemaking Oversight & Repeal Subcommittee, next scheduled to meet Monday, March 18th.

AIF supports any legislation allowing trained, professional health care providers to deliver basic care they may currently be prohibited from providing due to regulatory licensing barriers.

Environment and Agriculture

On Thursday, during the House Appropriations Committee meeting, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis** spoke in support of HB 7065, *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.

View Brewster Bevis's Testimony at the House Appropriations Committee at <http://youtu.be/IRHJpsxCLQA>

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 Monday, in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, AIF demonstrated its support for Senator Alan Hays' (R-Umatilla) SB 1106, *Relating to Agritourism*. Agritourism refers to the practice of attracting tourists to agricultural areas, usually for recreational or educational purposes. Agritourism provides Florida farmers with an alternative and innovative way to expand their incomes either through activities on the farm, or employment activities off of the farm.

Under current Florida law, also known as the *Greenbelt Law*, agricultural operative properties are taxed according to the "use" value of these operations rather than the developmental value. SB 1106 prohibits a local government from adopting ordinances or policies designed to prohibit or limit agritourism activity on land deemed "agricultural" by the county property appraiser. The bill also clarifies the definition of "agritourism activity," and establishes a limit on the liability for the landowner and the employees if a notice of risk is posted on the land.

The bill passed unanimously and will next be heard Wednesday, March 20th in the Senate Committee on Community Affairs.

Meanwhile, the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee met Tuesday, March 12th, to hear testimony on HB 927, *Relating to Agritourism*, by Representative Holly Merrill Raschein (R-Key Largo).

AIF waived in support of the bill and it passed unanimously. The bill now goes to the House Civil Justice Subcommittee.

AIF supports any legislation that allows Florida farmers to safely expand their businesses through the use of Agritourism.

On Thursday, the Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee considered SB 554, *Relating to Brownfield Areas*, by Senator Thad Altman (R-Melbourne). The bill specifies that redeveloping Brownfield areas can be a significant element in other revitalization areas, such as community redevelopment areas, enterprise zones, and closed military bases. SB 554 requires a local government to comply with certain provisions when designating a Brownfields area. Of these provisions, it allows for a public hearing when an area is going to be classified as a Brownfield. AIF stood in support and the bill passed without opposition.

The bill now moves to the Senate Committee on Community Affairs, scheduled to meet Wednesday, March 20th.

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.

Taxation

On Tuesday, during the House Energy & Utilities Subcommittee, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support of HB 807, *Relating to Emergency Communication System*, by Representative Greg Steube (R-Sarasota). The bill would reduce the current charge for 911 services on all phone lines, including mobile, from the current \$0.050 to \$0.046. In addition, the legislation implements the findings of the E911 Board, allowing for the collection of the 911 fee at the retail point of sale for prepaid wireless phone plans. Implementing a point of sale collection method for prepaid plans and enabling the fee to be collected from everyone with access to 911 may make it possible to reduce the fee for all consumers. The bill would also put priority on allowing counties to use funds to upgrade and replace 911 systems for next generation.



The legislation passed committee unanimously and moved on to the Thursday meeting of the House Finance and Tax Subcommittee. HB 807 was not voted on in the committee and will be discussed during the Office of EDR's Revenue Estimating Impact Conference this Saturday, March 16th at 10 am.

AIF supports lessening the 911 surcharge on Florida's phone users as well as supports a robust and modern emergency communications system vital to the welfare of Florida's business community.

On Thursday, the House Finance & Tax Subcommittee passed out nine very complex bills, several of which are important to AIF. First, HB 4013, *Relating to Tax Refund Programs*, by Representative David Santiago (R-Deltona) passed after many questions regarding the accountability of the incentive. If enacted, the bill would eliminate the maximum amount of tax refunds a business could receive over all fiscal years for the Quality Target Industry (QTI) and the Quality Defense and Space Flight Business Programs (QDSFB). Current limits imposed on the percentage of total award, and dollar amount a project could receive in a given fiscal year, would remain intact. Essentially, the bill removes the \$ 7 million cap and allows qualifying businesses to create more jobs and expand.

AIF testified in support of the bill and the bill passed by a vote of 14-1. It will now go to the Economic Affairs Committee, currently without a scheduled meeting date, before it is heard on the House floor.

AIF supports the bill because the incentive has produced 19,694 high paying jobs in the defense and space sector and this change will help create more such jobs.

In the same committee, the corporate income tax “piggy back” proposed committee bill (**PCB FTSC 13-04**) also passed after staff explained that the bill did not couple all the federal code changes. In January 2013, the federal government passed an act affecting the Internal Revenue Code called the *American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012*. The act contains provision that will reduce Florida’s corporate tax receipts over the next two years if adopted in Florida. The proposed committee bill will update the Florida Income Tax Code to reflect the changes made to the US Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986 by adopting the IRC as in effect on January 1, 2013.

As Florida usually does, the bill did not include the bonus depreciation and the expensing of certain asset purchases. The bill allows the same expense just over five years. Most companies expect this treatment and accept it.

The bill passed with no debate. It now will get a bill number and go to the House Appropriations Committee.

AIF supports the uncoupling of the federal stimulus programs because it would have a \$150 million fiscal impact on the state this year. AIF members support the method the bill uses to uncouple preventing a separate set of books for Florida.

Finally, the last bill heard was the E-Fairness bill **PCB FTSC 13-02**. The bill amends the mail order section of law to provide the ability of the state to require out of state retailers to collect the sales tax on purchases by Florida consumers. To be revenue neutral, the bill also provides for a sales tax holiday. AIF testified in support of the bill as did several other entities including the Florida Retail Federation.

The bill passed by a vote of 13-3. The committee bill has been filed as HB 7097 and will be heard in the House Appropriations committee.

AIF supports E – Fairness for our “brick and mortar” retailers who have a large disadvantage with out of state internet sales that do not collect the sales tax.

Education

On Wednesday, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education 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 testified encouraging members to support and the bill passed unanimously. 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 pre kindergarten 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. SB 1076 heads to the Senate Appropriations Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 21st.

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

On Thursday, the House Appropriations Committee passed HB 7009, *Relating to Charter Schools*, by Representative George Moraitis (R-Ft. Lauderdale), after nearly an hour of debate on amendments and the bill. Committee Chairman Seth McKeel (R-Lakeland) asked only parents testify in response to the bill. 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 along party lines and will next be heard in the House Education Committee Friday, March 22nd.

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

Also on Thursday, the House Education Committee heard reports by committee members regarding their visits to various early learning coalitions, boards and providers. Following the presentations Committee Chair Marlene O'Toole (R-Lady Lake) reminded everyone that a Proposed Committee Bill would be out soon, and would be carried by both her and Vice Chair Elizabeth Porter (R-Lake City).

The PCB will be comprised of 3 categories: governance, accountability and transparency. Under the governance category, Chair O'Toole stated that her goal is to create a Division of Early Learning, which will be managed by the Department of Education. The governance aspect of the bill will also create a restructuring plan. The accountability portion of the bill is to focus on child eligibility, health and safety, pre and post assessments and monitoring tools. The last portion of the bill will center on transparency in spending and uniformity in insurance requirements.

The Chair concluded the meeting by taking questions from members. During this time there was some concern surrounding the Gold Seal program versus the Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) program. In response, Chair O'Toole said that she's not sure the committee is ready to make a determination between the two, and it is something we need to continue to look at. Finally, Chair O'Toole said there would be no consolidation or growth of Early Learning Centers this year.

AIF supports early learning as it is imperative to developing a productive future Florida workforce.

Insurance

On Wednesday, the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee met in workshop session to hear HB 1107, *Relating to the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund*, by Representative Bill Hager (R-Boca Raton). AIF stood and encouraged the committee to support the bill which would begin to address Florida's over reliance of post event debt and assessments (hurricane taxes). The bill has not been voted on yet.

On Thursday, in the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee, AIF testified in support of SB 1262, *Relating to Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund*, by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla). Senator Hays' bill would represent a small first step to "right size" the Cat Fund and reduce the likelihood of post catastrophe assessments (hurricane taxes). The bill was considered in a workshop session and no formal vote was taken. There were two amendments to SB 1262 discussed. One amendment by Senator Hays represented a compromise and was supported by AIF in an effort to advance the bill. Another amendment which would have significantly weakened the Cat Fund was offered by Senator Jeremy Ring (D-Margate) and opposed by AIF. The bill and both amendments are expected to be taken up next week with a formal vote following committee debate.

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.

In the same committee, AIF stood in support of SB 810, *Relating to Wrap-Up Insurance Policies*, by Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs). The bill allows insurance companies to offer a deductible feature for a workers' compensation policy which covers all parties performing work on a major construction site. Florida businesses will have the option to substantially reduce insurance costs for new facilities' construction by purchasing a wrap-up policy with a deductible. In addition, a deductible creates a direct monetary incentive for a construction project owner or general contractor to maintain a safe work site for employees.

The bill passed committee unanimously and now moves to the Commerce & Tourism Committee, scheduled to meet Monday, March 18th.

In the same committee, AIF stood in support of SB 706, *Relating to Uninsured Motorist Insurance Coverage*, by Senator Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee). 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 who exercise this option to save 20% or more in premiums.

The bill also passed unanimously and moves to the Judiciary Committee, scheduled to meet Monday, March 18th. The House Regulatory Affairs Committee approved the bill's companion bill, HB 341 by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola) unanimously. The House bill will be placed on the House Calendar for action by the full House.

On Thursday, the House Regulatory Affairs Committee unanimously approved CS/HB 335, *Relating to Property and Casualty Insurance Rates and Forms*, by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton). Supported in committee by AIF, 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. The bill will be placed on the House Calendar for action by the full House.

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

Business Regulation

On Tuesday, during the House Business and Professional Regulation Subcommittee, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in respectful opposition to HB 163, *Relating to Ticket Sales*, by Representative Jimmie Smith (R- Lecanto). The legislation is being supported by an out-of-state ticket broker and would not allow Florida businesses, who are venues and teams, to impose any contractual term on a ticket. This would create great loss of control for those businesses. In addition, if enacted this legislation would have a detrimental impact on numerous downstream businesses such as restaurants, vendors, hotels, etc. due to the loss of revenue these ancillary businesses would see artists simply decline to come to the state to perform.

The legislation passed by a vote of 7-6 and will next be heard in House Regulatory Affairs Committee.

AIF has a long standing tradition of standing with Florida's "brick and mortar" employers and believes passage of this legislation could have a detrimental impact on those businesses.

SB 84, *Relating to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)*, by Senator Alex Diaz de la Portilla (R-Miami) passed the Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Accountability today with unanimous support. AIF stood in support of this bill, which, in its current form, allows local governments to utilize PPPs in a similar manner as state government. Essentially meaning, local governments will be able to accept unsolicited bids for infrastructure projects, etc. The current form of the bill is due to work done between Senator Diaz de la Portilla and AIF.

The bill passed with a vote of 8-0 and is on Committee agenda for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government for Tuesday, March 19th, if received.

AIF supports SB 84 and the sponsor's intention to encourage private sector investment into local infrastructure projects across the state. Public Private Partnerships have proven successful in aiding government needs for infrastructure project advancement utilizing private contractors, financiers and related industries.

Economic Development

At Wednesday's meeting of the Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee, SB 406, *Relating to Economic Development*, by Senator Andy Gardiner (R-Winter Park) was amended and favorably reported from committee by a vote of 10 to 1.

The bill, whose underlying purpose is to require additional analysis and reporting on the manner in which economic incentives are used by the state, was amended to include additional provisions, including some of potential interest to members of AIF. Two amendments regarding Brownfield's were added and would require local reporting on Brownfield's and create a limited area of the Brownfield space that would be eligible for the tax credits. There are concerns that these changes could reduce interest in Brownfield remediation and reduce the number of Brownfield projects. These issues will continue to be worked out with Senate staff.

Since the bill passed, it will next be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee, scheduled to meet Thursday, March 21st.

AIF supports any legislation seeking to streamline the evaluation and reporting process for Florida's economic development plans.

On the same day, AIF was present in the House Economic Development and Tourism Subcommittee to support HB 663 by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples). The bill amends the Economic Gardening Technical Assistance Pilot Program to remove the word "Pilot," thus making the Technical Assistance Program permanent, rather than its previous temporary status. The program has been in place since 2009, and is designed to provide low interest loans for infrastructure needs related to adding jobs and providing technical assistance to businesses with items related to the company's growth. Different than many incentive programs, Economic Gardening is designed to increase the number of jobs by encouraging existing, smaller Florida businesses to expand. With passage of HB 663, eligible businesses are those that have between 10-99 employees and have generated at least \$1 million but no more than \$50 million in annual revenue. It directs the Department of Economic Opportunity to form a contract with the University of Central Florida's Institute of Economic Gardening to implement the Technical Assistance Program; and revise the business eligibility requirements to accommodate slightly larger companies than previously eligible for the program. HB 663 also appropriates \$2 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund. These funds will go to the University of Central Florida to fund the Economic Gardening Technical Assistance Program and implement the Act during FY 2013-2014.

The bill will be reported to the House Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee.

Economic Gardening has been an initiative AIF has supported since originally enacted in 2009. While recruiting companies to the state is a vital part of the state's economic growth, so too is helping existing small businesses expand and become economic engines in their community.

Wage Theft

On Wednesday, in the House Civil Justice Subcommittee, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support of HB 1125, *Relating to Employers and Employees* by Representative Tom Goodson (R-Titusville). HB 1125 will establish a statewide system of addressing wage theft complaints through the county courts. HB 1125 addresses wage protection by creating a judicial process giving workers the ability to address their grievances in our court system. It will provide consistency for both employees *and* employers.



The bill passed committee with a vote of 11-2 and moves to House Local & Federal Affairs Committee, scheduled to meet Friday, March 22nd.

AIF supports any legislation aimed at protecting the wages of Florida employees and while supporting employers in their quest to maintain a productive work environment.

Aerospace

The House Transportation and Highway Safety Subcommittee met Tuesday to consider the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) legislative package for the 2013 Session. **PCB THSS 13-02** presented by Representative Frank Artiles (R-Miami) is similar to SB 1132 by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg), as it is an omnibus package serving as the primary legislation for FDOT priorities for 2013 that 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 FDOT to allocate up to \$15 million in funding for space related projects after collaboration with local input and other related industries including Space Florida. Lastly, **PCB THSS 13-02** would prohibit DOT from entering into any new lease purchase agreements with various transportation authorities.

The bill was reported favorably out of committee and will now be referenced to additional committees as a committee bill.

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 and related industries including Space Florida.

Ethics & Elections

On Monday, the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee unanimously passed SB 1382, *Relating to Campaign Finance*, by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater). This bill is a major restructuring of the state's regulation of campaign finance regulation. Key provisions of the bill:

- Revise limits on contributions to statewide candidates from \$500 to \$3,000 per election while leaving the \$500 limit in place for legislative and local candidates.
- Significantly increase the number and frequency of pre-election reports filed by candidates.
- Abolishes committees of continuous existence (CCEs). Existing CCEs would be allowed to convert to "political committees" having essentially the same roles as CCEs.

The Senate bill is now substantially similar to its House counterpart, HB 569 by Representative Rob Schenck (R-Spring Hill). HB 569 is very similar to the Senate version, except in the area of changing the limits on campaign contributions to candidates. An amendment in the House committee today revised the caps downward from \$10,000 for all candidates to \$5,000 for statewide candidates and \$3,000 for legislative and local candidates. The current Senate bill sets the caps at \$3,000 for statewide candidates but leaves them at the current \$500 per election for all other candidates. Both the Senate and House versions of the bill contain virtually identical provisions that require much more frequent reporting of contributions and expenditures by candidates, committees, and political parties during the sixty days preceding an election. Both versions of the bill also abolish committees of continuous existence (CCEs) as of September 30, 2013. It is expected that the two chambers will work out their differences on this legislation as their respective bills wind their ways through the process.

SB 1382 now heads to the Wednesday, March 20th meeting of the Senate Committee on Community Affairs.

HB 569 was passed by the House Committee on State Affairs with an 11-5 party-line vote on Thursday, March 14th. The bill now heads for the House floor where consideration is expected in the next week or so.

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

State Contracts

On Wednesday, Representative Ben Albritton, (R-Wauchula), presented HB 1309, Procurement of commodities and contractual services at the request of Chairman Jason Brodeur, (R-Sanford) of the House Government Operations Subcommittee.

Representative Albritton explained the strike all amendment that made a few changes to the bill. He said that State procurement of personal property and services is governed by chapter 287, F.S. The Department of Management Services (DMS) is responsible for maintaining uniform rules for and overseeing agency procurement, as well as negotiating statewide contracts to leverage the state's buying power.

In public testimony, AIF shared several concerns from the business community concerning several areas of the bill which remain unclear and may have unintended consequences. We look forward to continuing to work with Representative Albritton on improving the bill as it move through the process.

The bill passed 11-0 and will now go to the full Appropriations Committee.

Workforce

On Thursday, in the Senate Community Affairs Committee, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, spoke in support of SB 726, *Relating to the 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. A friendly amendment, which AIF supports, was offered by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater) that would remove language from the bill that would require employers provide a minimum sick leave policy. The amendment would also create a study task force to look at the issue. The amendment passed committee by voice vote.



The legislation passed committee by a vote of 6-2 and now moves to Health Policy Committee, next scheduled to meet Wednesday, March 20th.

AIF supports providing one uniform law with which all businesses in Florida will be required to comply. Preemption guarantees that we will have uniformity in the labor market in Florida.

Pension Reform

On Thursday, March 13th, the House State Affairs Committee amended and passed HB 7011, *Relating to the State Retirement System* by Representative Jason Brodeur (R -Sanford), with a party line vote of 12-6. AIF stood in support of this good bill which will reform the state's retirement system by making a number of changes. The most important of these changes is closing the pension program to future employees of the state. The bill will go a long way in reducing the state's budget risk and in doing so; provide more certainty to the business community.

On the same day, AIF stood in support of another retirement bill in the Senate Government Oversight and Accountability Committee, SB 1392 by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby), *Relating to Retirement*. The bill, which doesn't go as far as the house bill relating to retirement, reduces state budget risk relative to the state retirement system.

The bill passed unanimously and now moves to the Senate Committee on Community Affairs, scheduled to meet Wednesday, March 20th.

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.

International Driving Permits

On Wednesday, the full House approved HB 7059, *Relating to Driver Licensing*, by the House Economic Affairs Committee and it will now head to the Senate. The language in the bill would repeal provisions signed into law on a Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) bill last Session that required visitors from outside the United States to have an International Driving Permit to drive lawfully in Florida. The repeal would be retroactive to January 1, 2013, the date the measure first become effective.

The Senate companion, SB 1766 by the Senate Transportation Committee, was approved in Senate Community Affairs Committee on Thursday and is now ready for the floor. The Senate could take up the measure on the floor as early as next week.

AIF supports this vital legislation because it would repeal a law harmful to Florida's tourism industry.