

WEEKLY UPDATE



From March 17, 2017

EDUCATION

HB 859-Relating to Postsecondary Distance Education

On Monday, March 13th, **HB 859**, relating to Postsecondary Distance Education, by **Representative Amber Mariano (R-Port Richey)** was heard by the **House Post-Secondary Education Subcommittee** and passed unanimously by a vote of 14 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis stood in support of this bill.**

This legislation seeks to authorize Florida's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement known as "SARA" created by the Southern Regional Education Board and the National Council on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. This would allow for Florida's postsecondary institutions to voluntarily participate in what is a multi-state reciprocity agreement allowing them to offer online education without excessive fees and regulatory compliance processes. This reciprocity offers student's greater access to more distance education, enhances oversight of distance education offerings to Florida students by another state, and expands experiential learning opportunities across state lines. Not only is this good for students but it also helps lessen the burden on Florida businesses and taxpayers to fund construction and facility costs.

HB 859 will move on to the **House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee** for its second hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS our state university system's continued efforts to address the growing challenges that comes with increased enrollment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 600-Relating to Rural Economic Development Initiative

On Monday, March 13th, **SB 600**, relating to Rural Economic Development Initiative, by **Senator Denise Grimsley (R-Lake Placid)** was heard by the **Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism** and passed by a vote of 8 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

Currently, Florida's rural communities are experiencing additional challenges compared to their urban counterparts in many quality of life indicators. The state has an opportunity to improve the economic competitiveness of Florida's rural communities by reforming the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI). This legislation accomplishes this by:

- Focusing the mission of REDI on challenges rural communities face in the areas of workforce development and education, infrastructure, and access to healthcare;
- Streamlining REDI membership to ensure decision makers are at the table; and
- Making REDI a real tool for rural communities as they navigate through the red tape of state government.

SB 600 will now go to the **Senate Committee on Agriculture** for its second hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS efforts to increase economic development in Florida's rural areas by increasing job growth.

TRANSPORTATION

SB 340-Relating to Transportation Network Companies

On Tuesday, March 14th, **SB 340**, relating to Transportation Network Companies, by **Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg)** was heard by the **Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance** and passed by a vote of 7 yeas to 2 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

This bill was amended by the bill sponsor to more closely match the House companion bill, **HB 221**. This bill now aims to establish a statewide regulatory framework for transportation network companies and how they operate throughout communities in Florida. It also defines what constitutes as a "TNC vehicle", sets in place insurance requirements and preempts authority to the state, which will allow for a streamlined set of rules to be followed throughout the state.

SB 340 will now go to the **Senate Committee on Judiciary** for its second hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS statewide digital transportation service policies to create price competition, promote consumer choice, enhance customer experience, create jobs and remove anti-competitive local regulations.

SB 654-Relating to Transportation

On Tuesday, March 14th, **SB 654**, relating to Transportation, by **Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater)** was heard by the **Senate Committee on Transportation** and passed unanimously by a vote of 4 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

This bill shifts the distribution of the annual license taxes imposed on certain motor vehicle registrations from the General Revenue Fund to the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF). Beginning in Fiscal Year 2019-20, 50 percent of the portion of the annual license tax that is deposited into the General Revenue Fund is shifted to the State Transportation Trust Fund; in Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the remaining 50 percent is shifted into the STTF.

SB 654 will go on to the **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Finance and Tax** for its next hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS the distribution of additional funds to the STTF in order to maintain Florida's infrastructure.

LEGAL & JUDICIAL

SB 466-Relating to Motor Vehicle Warranty Repairs and Recall Repairs

On Tuesday, March 14th, **SB 466**, relating to Motor Vehicle Warranty Repairs and Recall Repairs, by **Senator Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast)** was heard in the **Senate Committee on Transportation** and passed by a vote of 4 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF stood in opposition to this bill.**

This bill prohibits a licensee, except as authorized by law, from denying a dealer's claim, reducing the dealer's compensation, or processing a chargeback to a dealer for performing covered warranty or recall repairs on a used motor vehicle under specified circumstances. The bill alters the playing field and may have a chilling effect on manufacturing in general. The complex issue surrounding safety recalls should be a federal matter, better addressed at the national level with the goal of creating uniform public policy that improves motor vehicle safety, encourages technological innovation, and protects our planet.

SB 466 will move on to the **Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism** to be heard.

AIF OPPOSES legislation that would intervene in any contractual agreement between a dealer franchise and an auto manufacturer, voluntarily entered by each party, and dictate new terms and conditions of such mutual agreement that favor one party over the other.

HEALTH CARE

SB 888-Relating to Prescription Drug Price Transparency

On Tuesday, March 14th, **SB 888**, relating to Prescription Drug Transparency, by **Senator Aaron Bean (R-Jacksonville)** was heard in the **Senate Committee on Judiciary** and unanimously passed by a vote of 6 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

Prescription drug costs continue to rise, and become a larger percentage of the overall health care spend in Florida. SB 888 creates more transparency in drug pricing, and will give consumers the ability to make more informed decisions regarding their health care spending. Currently, the law requires MyFloridaRX to provide the top 150 most prescribed drugs including their customary prices by pharmacies. This bill would double that number to 300 and codifies monthly reporting to the Agency for Health Care Administration (“AHCA”).

SB 888 will now go to the **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services** for its second hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS transparency in drug pricing as a tool for reducing the cost of health care coverage on Florida’s employers and employees.

HB 723-Relating to Maintenance of Certification

On Wednesday, March 15th, **HB 723**, relating to Maintenance of Certification, by **Representative Julio Gonzalez (R-Venice)** and **Representative Ralph Massullo (R-Beverly Hills)** was heard by the **House Health Quality Subcommittee** and passed by a vote of 11 yeas to 4 nays. **AIF’s Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in opposition of this bill.**

This bill eliminates the requirement of physicians to maintain board certification in a subspecialty as conditions of licensure, reimbursement, employment, or admitting privileges. Currently, hospitals or private employers have the ability to require their physicians who may practice in a specialty field to hold and/or maintain such specialty certifications. As medical practices change daily, allowing employers this ability will ensure that these physicians have the utmost knowledge and skill pertaining to their specialty. Hosting top medical facilities, as well as world renowned specialty physicians, is one of the many things that brings people to Florida. We want our physicians to be on the cutting edge of their field and the only way to accomplish that is to continue to implement the requirement of maintaining certification.

HB 723 will now go to the **House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee** to be heard.

AIF OPPOSES government mandates that regulate how private employers hire their employees.

HB 589-Relating to Prescription Drug Price Transparency

On Thursday, March 16th, **HB 589**, relating to Prescription Drug Price Transparency, by **Representative Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville)** was heard in the **House Health & Human Services Committee** and passed. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

Prescription drug costs continue to rise, and become a larger percentage of the overall health care spend in Florida. HB 589 creates more transparency in drug pricing, and will give consumers the ability to make more informed decisions regarding their health care spending. Currently, the law requires MyFloridaRX to provide the top 150 most prescribed drugs including their customary prices by pharmacies. This bill would double that number to 300 and codifies monthly reporting to the Agency for Health Care Administration ("AHCA").

HB 589 will now go to the House floor to be heard.

AIF SUPPORTS transparency in drug pricing as a tool for reducing the cost of health care coverage on Florida's employers and employees.

INSURANCE

IBS1-Relating to Workers' Compensation

On Tuesday, March 14th, **IBS1**, relating to Workers' Compensation by the **House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee** was heard by the **House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee** and passed by a vote of 14 yeas to 1 nay. **AIF spoke in opposition to the bill.**

This legislation seeks to address the issues within Florida's Workers' Compensation law that have deemed the law unconstitutional, specifically the issue of rate increases, attorney fees, claimant benefits, etc. While AIF applauds the **House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee** for aiming to fix this delicate issue we believe there is still much work to be done.

Representative Jay Fant (R-Jacksonville) offered a strike all amendment to make steps to remedy the major problem at hand, attorney fees. The business community was united in support of the Fant amendment that would move

Florida to a claimant paid system, in-line with 32 other states. **AIF spoke in support of this amendment**, but unfortunately this amendment was not reported favorably.

IBS1 is not currently referred to any other committees of reference. Please see below statement from our President & CEO, Tom Feeney, regarding today's workers' compensation legislation:

Florida's Business Community Deserves Stable, Self-Executing & Affordable Workers' Compensation System
AIF Applauds Representative Fant for Leading Charge for Small Employers & Injured Workers

Tallahassee, Fla. – The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) today released the following statement on behalf of its President & CEO Tom Feeney, who also serves as the chair of its “Florida Workers’ Compensation Strategic Task Force,” regarding workers’ compensation legislation today heard in the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee.

“While we appreciate the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee for their work on legislation to address Florida’s ailing workers’ compensation system, AIF and our members believe there is still work to be done.

“AIF’s ‘Florida Workers’ Compensation Strategic Task Force’ proposed a bill that will go a long way in helping Florida’s injured workers to get healthier, while relieving burdensome pressures on Florida’s employers. Florida’s business community deserves a stable, self-executing and affordable system to care for injured workers.

“HB 1107, championed by Representative Albritton, addresses one of the components of relieving this pressure by exempting public records requirements relating to injured or deceased workers. Additionally, we would like to thank Representative Fant for filing an amendment to the proposed committee bill on workers’ compensation that would have rescued the business community from the attacks made by the hostile Florida Supreme Court decisions. Representative Fant and the six committee members who voted in favor of this amendment did the right thing today by standing up for Florida’s businesses – both large and small – against the trial lawyers.

“As this legislation progresses, we encourage our state’s leaders to consider all aspects of the Workers’ Compensation Act in Florida and put in place commonsense solutions that address unnecessary, costly and time consuming litigation. This will allow injured workers to receive their benefits as soon as possible.”

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HB 1107-Relating to Public Records/Workers’ Compensation

On Tuesday, March 14th, **HB 1107**, relating to Public Records/Workers’ Compensation, by **Representative Ben Albritton (R-Bartow)** was heard by the **House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee** and passed unanimously by

a vote of 15 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, spoke in support of this bill.**

This bill would exempt private and personal identifying information of an injured worker or deceased employee from public record. Currently, this information is open to the public and often times injured workers are inundated with outreach from attorneys wanting to take on their cases immediately after filing their claim.

HB 1107 will now go to the **House Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee** for its second hearing.

AIF SUPPORTS protecting the private information of injured or deceased employees.

HB 1421-Relating to Property Insurance Assignment Agreements

On Tuesday, March 14th, **HB 1421**, relating to Property Insurance Assignment Agreements, by **Representative James Grant (R-Tampa)** was heard by the **House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee** and passed by a vote of 14 yeas to 1 nay. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

The bill moves AOB claims to a prevailing party attorney fee system, effectively cutting off one-way fees for assignees. The sponsor, Rep. Jamie Grant, filed a strike-all amendment Monday evening, which purported to institute a more complex, presuit process. This strike all was voted down in committee after concerns expressed by many, including Insurance Commissioner David Altmaier, that the strike-all amendment would not further the goal to cut fraud, waste, and abuse. Associated Industries of Florida was at the hearing, and was supportive of another amendment to include auto glass in the scope of the underlying bill, which was explained and withdrawn. We are working to address this important issue at the next stop. In addition, a motion to limit debate was made to get the underlying bill out of committee, which cut short public testimony. The underlying bill passed, which represents a much better solution than the strike-all. However, the preferred method of addressing AOB abuse is the simple and direct approach of **SB 1038**. AIF is actively working to ensure that the Legislature is aware of the true fix to the AOB crisis: extinguishing one-way attorney fees for assignees.

HB 1421 will now go to the **House Commerce Committee** to be heard.

AIF SUPPORTS reforms to the assignment of benefits process to protect consumers against these abuses.

ENVIRONMENT

SB 874-Relating to Nutrient Pollution from Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems

On Tuesday, March 14th, **SB 874**, relating to Nutrient Pollution from Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems, by **Senator Dana Young (R-Tampa)** was heard by **Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation** then passed by a vote of 7 yeas to 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

This bill authorizes the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to administer the onsite sewage remediation program. This includes installing high efficiency systems as well as conversion from septic to sewer. The bill also authorizes a minimum 50% cost share and allows FDEP to cost share large scale storm water projects as well as much removal projects in the Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie River and Caloosahatchee River watersheds. This bill dedicates a minimum of \$20M per year to this effort.

SB 847 will now go to the **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Environment and Natural Resources** to be heard.

AIF SUPPORTS this legislation as it establishes a cost share program to focus specifically on local basin nutrient loss within the Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie, and Caloosahatchee watersheds.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

HB 687-Relating to Utilities

On Wednesday, March 15th, **HB 687**, relating to Utilities by **Representative Mike La Rosa (R-Saint Cloud)** was heard by the **House Energy & Utilities Subcommittee** and passed by 12 yeas to 2 nays. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

This bill creates the Advanced Wireless Infrastructure Deployment Act which would ultimately allow for 5G technology throughout the state of Florida.

HB 687 will now go to its second committee hearing in the **House Commerce Committee.**

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that accommodates for the increasing need for reliable wireless networks to help support communities and businesses of the future.

Please see the below statement from our President & CEO, Tom Feeney, regarding HB 687:

AIF: Bring Smart Cities & Ultra-fast Wireless Network Speeds to Florida

Tallahassee, Fla. – The **Associated Industries of Florida (AIF)** today released the following statement on behalf of its President & CEO Tom Feeney regarding the support of House Bill 687, by Representative Mike La Rosa, relating to Utilities. HB 687 was today heard in the House Energy & Utilities Subcommittee, its first committee of reference.

“AIF supports HB 687, which would bring Florida into the next generation of wireless technology to support communities of the future. By streamlining the process to deploy small cell technology around our state, Florida’s businesses and families can have smart cities and ultra-fast wireless network speeds.

“This good public policy will spur increased investments in the state, attracting innovative and technologically advanced companies to Florida. Additionally, this legislation secures the bandwidth Florida families need as their data demands continue to rise.

“AIF and our members encourage Florida lawmakers to give Floridians the opportunity to be a part of the smart cities revolution sooner rather than later.”

PUBLIC NOTICES

HB 897-Relating Public Notices by Local Governmental Entities

On Wednesday, March 15th, **HB 897**, relating to Public Notices by Local Governmental Entities, by **Representative Richard Stark (D-Weston)** was heard by the **House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee** and temporarily postponed. **AIF stood in opposition to this bill.**

The Florida Constitution requires public notice be given for meetings at which official acts are to be taken or where public business is to be conducted. Several statutory provisions require notice to be given for certain actions undertaken by local governments. The bill authorizes counties and municipalities to publish legally required notices and advertisements on their official websites instead of in print.

As HB 897 was temporarily postponed we do not expect this bill to be calendared for another hearing.

AIF continues to support requirements that public notices be printed in local newspapers as defined by Chapter 50, Florida Statutes, as well as displayed on the Internet.