



INTERIM BRIEF

For the 2019 Legislative Session

From February 19, 2019

LEGAL & JUDICIAL

SB 76 – Relating to Use of Wireless Communication Devices While Driving

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, SB 76 by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Spring Hill) was heard before the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee and was voted favorably with 8 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF’s Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this legislation.**

Currently, Florida law prohibits a person from texting, emailing, and instant messaging while driving, however, enforcement of this is a secondary offense, which means a law enforcement officer must detain a driver for another traffic offense in order to cite the driver for texting while driving. This bill would change the current enforcement from a secondary offense to a primary offense for all distracted driving, not just texting and emailing, allowing law enforcement officers to stop a vehicle solely for driving while distracted. The main goal of this legislation is to eliminate a component that contributes to distracted driving on Florida’s roadways.

SB 76 will now head to the Senate Innovation, Industry, and Technology Committee.

AIF supports legislation that addresses the issue of distracted driving and will ensure public safety for all on Florida’s roadways.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 526 – Relating to the Entertainment Industry

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, SB 526 by Senator Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota) was heard before the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee and was voted favorably with 4 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF’s Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this legislation.**

This bill creates the Film, Television, and Digital Media Targeted Grant Program to encourage economic development related to the production of film, television, and digital media in Florida. The Program offers grants to certified film, television, and digital media projects that, among other requirements, employ Florida residents and spend at least 70 percent of their production days in Florida. A certified project may only receive a grant after it has completed production and the Office of Film and Entertainment have verified its expenditures.

SB 526 will now head to the Senate Innovation, Industry, and Technology Committee.

AIF supports the Entertainment Tax Credit Program due to the jobs a more robust film industry would produce here in the state of Florida.

SB 596 – Relating to Regional Rural Development Grants

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, **SB 596** by Senator Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) was heard before the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee and was voted favorably with 4 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF’s Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this legislation.**

The bill makes changes to how the Regional Rural Development Grant program and the Rural Infrastructure Fund operate. Specifically, the bill amends the Regional Rural Development Grant Program to:

- Increase the maximum annual grant amount to \$250,000 from \$150,000 that three regional economic development organizations that serve the entire region of a rural area of opportunity may receive;
- Increase the amount of funds the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) may expend for the program to up to \$1 million annually (from up to \$750,000 annually);
- Reduce the required match the regional economic development organizations must contribute in non-state resources from 100 percent to 25 percent of the state’s contribution; and
- Allow the use of grant funds to build the professional capacity of regional economic development organizations. The bill amends the Rural Infrastructure Fund program to:
 - Increase the grant awards to 50 percent of infrastructure project costs (up from 30 percent);
 - Clarify that eligible infrastructure projects include access to broadband Internet service, and projects that improve service and access must be through a partnership that was publicly noticed and competitively bid; and
 - Require the DEO to review the grant program application and award procedures by September 1, 2020.

SB 596 will now head to the Senate Innovation, Industry, and Technology Committee.

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