

DAILY BRIEF

For the 2021 Legislative Session



FROM MARCH 31, 2021

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SB 1592 – Relating to Broadband Internet Infrastructure

On Wednesday, March 31, [SB 1592](#) by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) was heard by the Senate Finance and Tax Committee and was reported favorable with 6 yeas and 2 nays. **AIF's Legislative Affairs Assistant, BD Jogerst, stood in support of this legislation.**

The bill provides a procedure for access by broadband providers for attachments to utility poles of municipal electric utilities. It provides for the adoption of rates, terms, and conditions for the access to the poles consistent with federal requirements for pole attachments. Additionally, the bill prohibits municipal electric utilities from preventing broadband providers from using certain techniques and equipment in the installation of attachments which are done in accordance with established safety standards. The bill also prevents municipal electric utilities from requiring a broadband provider to comply with pole attachment specifications that exceed existing codes standards.

SB 1592 will now go to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AIF supports increased access to broadband internet as quality connectivity has become imperative to business operations across the state, especially during a time when so many businesses are operating remotely.

EMPLOYERS

SB 912 – Relating to Tolling and Extension of Permits and Other Authorizations During States of Emergency

On Wednesday, March 31, [SB 912](#) by Senator Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) was heard by the Senate Rules Committee and was reported favorable with 15 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF stood in support of this legislation.**

The bill adds certain permits and development agreements, including consumptive use permits and local government development agreements, to the current emergency tolling statute. The tolling statute allows for the tolling of the time of the state of emergency plus an additional six months. For example, if a state of emergency is declared for a hurricane that lasts for two months, at the end of the state of emergency, a permit holding entity can exercise the tolling option and receive those two months back to the permitted time allotment and add on an additional six months. The bill is retroactive to include the entirety of the COVID-19 state of emergency.

SB 912 will now go to the Senate floor for consideration.

AIF supports legislation that prevents Florida businesses from being penalized on permitted time due to a state of emergency that is out of their control. Economic recovery after an emergency is imperative and businesses drive recovery via employment and production, none of which is possible if an operating permit has expired.

ENVIRONMENT

SB 2516 – Relating to Water Storage North of Lake Okeechobee

On Wednesday, March 31, [SB 2516](#), sponsored and heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee, was reported favorable with 19 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this legislation.**

The bill requires the South Florida Water Management District in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to expedite implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP). The LOWRP is a project that provides water storage north of Lake Okeechobee.

The bill provides a \$50 million annual appropriation for the LOWRP.

SB 2516 will now go to the Senate floor for consideration.

AIF supports efforts to capture and store water north of Lake Okeechobee which will support the reduction of harmful discharges from the lake thus preserving Florida's most important natural resource and the businesses that depend on clean water.

TRANSPORTATION

HB 223 – Relating to Marina Evacuations

On Wednesday, March 31, [HB 223](#) by Representative Rene Plasencia (R-Titusville) was read a second time on the House floor and was rolled to third reading.

The bill prohibits, upon the issuance of a hurricane watch that affects marinas located in a deep-water seaport, vessels under 500 gross tons from remaining in the waters of marinas that have been deemed not suitable for refuge during a hurricane. The bill requires that vessel owners promptly remove their vessels from the waterways upon issuance of an evacuation order by the deep-water seaport. Additionally, the bill grants the marina owner, operator, employee, or agent the right to remove vessels that have not been removed by the vessel owner. The bill also shields the marina from liability concerning the movement of the vessel.

HB 223 will now be read a third time on the House floor.

AIF supports legislative efforts that protect Florida's seaport operators in the event of a hurricane. Florida's seaports are vitally important to economic development in the state and abroad and derelict vessels must not burden business operations in our ports.