

DAILY BRIEF

For the 2022 Legislative Session



FROM FEBRUARY 7, 2022

AGRICULTURE

SB 1210 - Relating to Development of Current or Former Agricultural Land

On Monday, February 7, [SB 1210](#) by Senator Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) was heard by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee and was reported favorable with 6 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's Vice President of Governmental Affairs, Adam Basford, stood in support of this legislation.**

As a matter of common practice in real estate transactions and other permitting, environmental assessments are conducted to ensure there are not any environmental contamination issues. In a vast majority of transactions on agricultural lands, a relatively simple "phase 1" assessment suffices. However, recently some municipalities have implemented new criteria which presume all agricultural lands are contaminated. As such, they must complete a "phase 2" assessment which includes taking representative samples throughout the entire parcel for analysis.

The bill specifies that the Secretary of Environmental Protection (Secretary) has exclusive jurisdiction in setting standards or procedures for evaluating environmental conditions and assessing potential liability for the presence of contaminants on land that is classified as agricultural and is being converted to a nonagricultural use. The bill prohibits the Secretary from delegating such authority to a city, a county, or another unit of local government through a local pollution control program.

SB 1210 will now go to the Senate Agriculture Committee.

AIF supports legislation which protects the normal and customary procedures for environmental assessments on agricultural lands. AIF further supports unifying regulatory authority over site assessments for current or former agricultural lands by making the Florida Department of Environmental Protection the sole authority for evaluating environmental conditions and assessing potential liability for the presence of contaminants on current or former agricultural properties.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HB 685 – Relating to Rural Development

On Monday, February 7, [HB 685](#) by Representative Brad Drake (R-Marianna) was heard by the House Infrastructure and Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee and was reported favorable with 12 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF’s Legislative Affairs Assistant, BD Jogerst, stood in support of this legislation.**

Florida has a variety of economic grant and loan programs to aid the development of rural and otherwise economically distressed regions of the state. The bill reduces the required non-state match amount for the Regional Rural Development Grants Program from 25% to 15% and allows in-kind contributions to count toward this threshold. The bill removes the requirement that repaid funds from the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund be matched in order to be retained to fund future loans. Finally, the bill revises the uses of the Rural Infrastructure Fund to remove the requirement that grants be linked to financing specific projects. It increases the proportion of an infrastructure project that may be covered by the grant from 50% to 75% and increases the maximum grant for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and preparation activities to \$300,000 for all projects.

HB 685 will now go to the House Commerce Committee.

AIF supports legislative efforts to increase economic development in Florida’s rural areas by increasing job growth and access to well-paying jobs.

INSURANCE

HB 1525 – Relating to Motor Vehicle Insurance

On Monday, February 7, [HB 1525](#) by Representative Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach) was heard by the House Civil Justice and Property Rights Subcommittee and was reported favorable with 15 yeas and 3 nays. **AIF’s Vice President of Governmental Affairs, Adam Basford, spoke in opposition to this legislation.**

The bill repeals the Florida Motor Vehicle No-Fault Law which requires every owner and registrant of a motor vehicle in this state to maintain Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage. By repealing PIP, the bill removes PIP’s tort liability limitation, making drivers at fault in an accident fully liable for any damages they cause. Beginning July 1, 2023, the bill enacts financial responsibility requirements for liability for motor vehicle ownership or operation, as follows:

- For bodily injury (BI) or death of one person in any one crash, \$25,000 and \$50,000 for BI or death of two or more people in any one crash.
- The existing \$10,000 financial responsibility requirement for property damage is retained.

HB 1525 will now go to the House Judiciary Committee.

AIF opposes this legislation in the current form as it simply shifts insurance costs - much like squeezing a balloon - rather than comprehensively lowering them. AIF believes it is critical that any discussions to repeal PIP and move to BI be deliberative, thoughtful, and involve all stakeholders from the outset.