



ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA

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# Champions for Business

**W**hat is a *Champion for Business* award? Simply put, it symbolizes our gratitude for extraordinary efforts by legislators on behalf of the business community.

For more than three decades, Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) has published *Voting Records*, an analysis of every vote cast by every legislator on every major business issues. The votes each legislator actually casts provide tangible evidence of whether or not that legislator upholds the ability of Florida companies to operate free of overly burdensome state regulation and taxation. It is a valuable tool used by AIF and the business community to determine which legislators running for re-election deserve our support. Yet, voting records only tell part of the story.

AIF also helps its member companies detect what bills and amendments are filed by whom, and who is taking part in behind-the-scene efforts and debates on behalf of the business community. These intangible forms of support through non-voting actions are also of vital importance and merit recognition.

AIF instituted the *Champion for Business* award in 2003 to acknowledge lawmakers who do more than vote for business and provide leadership on key legislation. A *Champion for Business* is a legislator who takes risks for his or her belief in the free-enterprise system, who defies the status quo when it is harmful to our state's competitive climate, and who faces down opponents to the growing prosperity of Florida's citizens.

The *Champion for Business* is evidence that, in our efforts to let our members and their legislators know who has been good for business and who has been bad, we leave no stone unturned.

This year, the AIF Legislative Team selected those legislators who we deem are strong and forceful advocates for the business community. In our collective wisdom, these ten legislators are the epitome of what a Champion for Business should be. Whether they proposed an important bill, authored a key amendment, or toiled behind the scenes, these legislators are the ones who made a difference this session. In addition, we have highlighted five legislators this year as Honorable Mentions for their contributions to furthering the business agenda. Last, but certainly not least, AIF is proud to present Council Awards to a group of policymakers who exhibited great leadership on behalf of AIF's Council System.

Throughout the 60 days of lawmaking, these were the senators and representatives we turned to when we needed someone on whom we could depend. They all deserve to be singled out for their dedication to our free-market economy.

Maybe they are the exception, rather than the rule. But that's why we want to recognize them, because we need more of them in government.

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## Representative Thad Altman



(R-Melbourne) is receiving his Champion for Business Award this year because of his leadership and commitment

to maintaining Florida's dominant position in the space industry. As the space shuttle program comes to an end, Florida must look for opportunities to maintain its historical dominance in space by establishing policies that will encourage investment in Florida's space infrastructure. Rep. Altman was the point person in the House of Representatives on all issues regarding space, as he sponsored a number of bills advancing the aerospace agenda. He ensured the passage of HB 1373, which expands the Qualified Defense Contractor Tax Refund Program to qualified space contractors. This legislation will prove instrumental in attracting new commercial space companies to Florida and help those already residing within the state. Rep. Altman was also instrumental in securing vital funding, during a tough budget year, for investments in existing space infrastructure. AIF is proud to designate Rep. Altman as a Champion for Business.

## Representative Anitere Flores



(R-Miami) is a first-time Champion for Business Award recipient and is being singled out for her leadership on education and workforce develop-

ment issues. For some time now, Rep. Flores has been working on legislation designed to enhance Florida's curriculum standards and bring them in line with the current needs of employers in Florida. Rep. Flores reached out to AIF early in the process and listened intently to the recommendations made by members of the business community. Many of these provisions made it into Rep. Flores' curriculum standards bill, which

emphasizes the core subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic. Just when it seemed as if no educational reforms would make it this year, Rep. Flores was able to include her language in SB 1908, an omnibus education package that is on its way to the Governor for his signature. For her commitment to improving Florida's workforce, we proudly recognize Rep. Flores as a Champion for Business.

## Representative Peter Nehr



(R-Tarpon Springs) is receiving his first Champion for Business Award for sponsoring and passing one of AIF's priority bills for

the 2008 session — HB 909 Relating to Ad Valorem Taxation. This legislation will provide Floridians with a standard procedure by which they can challenge their local property appraiser's assessment of the value of their property. Rep. Nehr's bill incorporates the recommendations made by the Auditor General on how Value Adjustment Boards operate, providing a more balanced board to hear consumer concerns in local communities. Up until final passage of the bill, Rep. Nehr consulted with AIF and implemented many of the recommendations made by our members. It is evident that Rep. Nehr has Florida's small businesses' best interest in mind by including language that allows appraisals to be based on the actual use of the property at the time of appraisal, instead of under the highest and best use method. AIF is proud to recognize Rep. Nehr as a Champion for Business.

## Representative Ray Sansom



(R-Ft. Walton Beach) is receiving his first Champion for Business Award for his commitment to economic development innovations and for his strong support of the business community in Florida. Rep. Sansom

approached AIF last fall about developing an Economic Stimulus Package that would reinvigorate Florida's already lagging economy. AIF and 18 other business associations answered the call and with his input, assembled a package outlining a number of recommendations for investments in infrastructure projects in Florida. As chairman of the powerful House Policy and Budget Council, Rep. Sansom permitted the business community to present the package before the Council allowing ample time for discussion on the recommendations. When talks surfaced during session about moving the Division of Corporations from the Department of State to the Department of Revenue — a move vehemently opposed by AIF — Rep. Sansom was there to discourage any further consideration of this bad idea. AIF is proud to recognize Rep. Sansom as a 2008 Champion for Business.

## Representative Baxter Troutman

(R-Winter Haven) led the charge this



year to bring relief to the countless number of businesses and Floridians who have been victims of secondary metal theft. Unscrupulous criminals have cost businesses

millions of dollars in damages and have endangered public safety by stealing copper wiring from construction sites, digging up underground telecommunication wires, cutting utility wires and even stealing beer kegs. Rep. Troutman's legislation will help law enforcement find thieves and make it harder for them to unload their stolen goods. Rep. Troutman, a victim himself of metal theft, worked closely with members of the Floridians for Copper and Metal Crime Prevention Coalition (a broad-based coalition of over 30 businesses and associations who have been affected by this crime) to pass this much-needed legislation. We proudly recognize Rep. Troutman as a 2008 Champion for Business.

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**Senator Mike Bennett** (R-Bradenton)



is no stranger to the Champion for Business Award, being a multiple recipient of this distinction. This year, AIF is proud to recognize Sen.

Bennett as a Champion for Business for his efforts to pass legislation dealing with the Administrative Procedures Act. His legislation provides additional incentives to state agencies to adopt their policies using the required rulemaking process (which provides opportunities for public participation) by prohibiting an agency from relying on unadopted rules, and increasing the attorneys' fees from \$15,000 to \$50,000 available to a business that successfully challenges unauthorized agency rules. Last session, this same legislation was passed but was unfortunately vetoed by the Governor, even though it passed the House and Senate without a negative vote. Sen. Bennett was able to bring the business community and state agencies together to hammer out the issues with the bill, and we believe the Governor will sign the bill.

**Senator Mike Fasano**

(R-New Port Richey) is receiving his first Champion for Business Award. As Chairman of the influential Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee, Sen. Fasano plays an integral role in deciding how state dollars are allocated for economic development and infrastructure investments. AIF was able to count on Sen. Fasano during budget negotiations between the Senate and House, and nowhere was he more influential than in preventing members of the House from raiding close to \$700 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund. In addition, Sen. Fasano was an early supporter of AIF's Economic Stimulus Package (ESP). In fact, he was also instrumental in appropriating valuable affordable housing

dollars for down payment-assistance programs for first-time homebuyers — a recommendation set forth by AIF in its ESP. Sen. Fasano also sponsored AIF priority bills dealing with the New Markets Tax Credit Program and expedited permitting for targeted industries. In a year when state dollars were scarce, Sen. Fasano was a true friend to the business community, looking out for their needs every step of the way. For these reasons we are proud to recognize him as a Champion for Business.

**Senator Mike Haridopolos**

(R-Melbourne), now a three-time award



winner, continues to shine brightly as one of the top pro-business legislators serving in the Florida Legislature. His leadership and opposition on the proposed "tax swap" approved by the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission is critical, especially at a time when the business community is being attacked by enemies of the free-market system. This year Sen. Haridopolos co-sponsored the Senate companion to one of the few property tax relief bills passed by the Legislature — SB 2080 Relating to Value Adjustment Boards. This legislation implements recommendations from the Auditor General's report on Value Adjustment Boards and brings much needed fairness to this process. For this and countless other reasons, AIF is proud to recognize Sen. Haridopolos as a Champion for Business.

**Senator Bill Posey** (R-Rockledge), one of the top ranking members of the

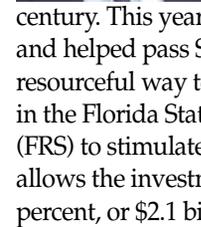


Florida Senate, could have picked any subject to champion this year. We were thrilled when Senator Posey chose Florida's space industry as one of his top priorities. A number of space-related bills were filed by Sen. Posey, but none as important

as his legislation providing limitations on liability for commercial launch firms and their subcontractors who provide human spaceflight services from Florida launch sites. This legislation will keep Florida's competitive edge in the aerospace industry allowing us to recruit and maintain new business to Florida. Sen. Posey also co-sponsored legislation expanding an existing tax refund program to qualified space contractors. For his strong commitment to the future of space in Florida, AIF is proud to call Sen. Bill Posey a Champion for Business.

**Senator Jeremy Ring** (D-Margate)

continues to lead the way as an innovative legislator in the area of economic development and further helping to position Florida's economy to compete in the 21st



century. This year Sen. Ring sponsored and helped pass SB 2310, a creative and resourceful way to utilize existing funds in the Florida State Retirement System (FRS) to stimulate the economy. The bill allows the investment of as much as 1.5 percent, or \$2.1 billion, in specific businesses across Florida. An AIF priority for the 2008 session, it could have a tremendous impact on Florida's business environment. In addition to the infusion of capital in Florida-based businesses, the bill also provides for a \$40 million, one-time cash prize to the private sector firm that provides the most significant advancement within the reusable space vehicle industry. We proudly recognize Sen. Ring as a Champion for Business for providing a proactive solution to Florida's sputtering economy.

# Honorable Mention

The following legislators have also made significant contributions that further the business agenda in Florida. Their efforts and dedication to issues important to employers should be highlighted. We applaud these five legislators for their continued support of AIF and its member companies.

## Representative Dean Cannon



(R-Winter Park) continues to be strong supporter of the business community. This year he led the House of Representatives'

efforts to bring a commuter rail to Central Florida. Although the proposal ultimately failed due to strong opposition from enemies of the free-enterprise system, including the unions and trial lawyers, Rep. Cannon was nonetheless a vocal champion for this cause and has vowed to continue to work for the approval of this important project for Florida's future. As chairman of the Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council, Rep. Cannon presided over a number of business-friendly bills, including the growth-management package and legislation crafted to help with Florida's aggregate crisis. Rep. Cannon also filed HB 1283, which requires property appraisers to earn the presumption of correctness when dealing with taxpayers. Unfortunately, this pro-business legislation was not accepted by the Senate, but we fully expect Rep. Cannon to file this legislation next year.

## Representative Jack Seiler



(D-Pompano Beach) was one of the legislators AIF turned to on issues relating to protecting private property rights. Throughout

the 2008 session he debated on the floor of the House in favor of business owners' rights to their property, especially during the debate on the "Guns in the Workplace" bill. Although this bill — opposed strongly by AIF — passed, Rep. Seiler understood the responsibil-

ity of employers to keep their workers safe. In addition, he argued convincingly about the injustice of a business going through all proper permitting processes for siting business activities, only to be denied the right to do business via an amendment to a bill.

## Representative Maria Sachs



(D-Delray Beach) is being recognized for her work on bringing more foreign languages to Florida's schools. Rep. Sachs

filed legislation (HB 207) this year that adds provisions relating to certification options for teachers of certain foreign language subjects so that students may access more languages, such as Chinese, Hebrew, Italian, and others. She was successful in navigating the legislative process during the last days of session to ensure that her language would ultimately be included in the omnibus education package (SB 1908) that passed this year. Having access to classes in modern languages that are used around the world for commerce is incredibly important to the business community. Access to these languages will give our students the foundation they need to compete in the global workforce, thus ensuring that Florida's businesses can compete with their counterparts across the world.

## Representative Franklin Sands



(D-Plantation), as the incoming House Minority Leader, has been a great friend to the business community. Time and time again he

has sought input from employer groups and continues to be sensitive to issues

affecting Florida's business climate.

Rep. Sands filed a number of pro-business bills including legislation dealing with impact fees, the My Safe Florida Home Program, and additional homestead property tax exemptions for first-time home buyers. His true leadership shined during the last weeks of session as he worked to help pass business-friendly legislation and tried to defeat anti-business amendments during those tense times.

## Senator Lee Constantine



(R-Altamonte Springs) was a prime co-sponsor of legislation dealing with secondary metal theft and was a strong force in

helping to pass this important business-friendly legislation in the Senate. Due to the increasing worldwide demand for metals, metal theft is on the rise and can jeopardize the safety of individuals who are affected by the theft, as well as wreak havoc on communities by causing power outages and surges. The bill creates a paper trail to catch thieves and punish the limited group of scrap dealers who are the root of the problem. The legislation would also require secondary metal dealers to keep detailed records of their scrap metal transactions. Sen. Constantine was a great spokesman for the bill and effectively communicated the dangerous consequences surrounding this costly criminal activity for business owners and Florida residents alike.

# Council Awards

Associated Industries of Florida is made up of a diverse group of businesses and associations that represent a wide array of economic sectors. AIF has organized a number of Councils in order to best represent groups of employers that share a common subject area or expertise. AIF's council system has already produced excellent results, both legislatively and politically.

## Financial Securities Council

### Representative Dennis Ross



(R-Lakeland), the lead negotiator for the House of Representatives on property insurance issues, held firmly to his beliefs that excessive regulatory rules are not the way to bring back the private insurance market to Florida. Many of the onerous provisions included in the original version of SB 2860, as approved by the Senate, were successfully removed by Rep. Ross. These included fine amounts that were excessive as well as provisions that would subject all lines of insurance (not just property insurance) to anti-trust provisions that would have led to a dramatic increase in litigation. Rep. Ross' long-standing position against government intrusion into the private insurance market has been a beacon of hope for the business community. For this and many other reasons, AIF's Financial Securities Council is proud to recognize Rep. Dennis Ross as its House Legislator of the Year.

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### Senator Al Lawson



(D-Tallahassee) had the wherewithal to stand up against Senate leadership and oppose the issue of additional reforms to the property insurance market in Florida. He was one of the few senators to vote against SB 2860 at each committee stop and on the floor of the Senate. Sen. Lawson debated strongly against extending the freeze on Citizen Property Insurance Corporation's rates as well as the establishment of dangerous regulatory reprimands against private insurers. He warned members of the Senate on the dangers of more government intrusion in the marketplace by telling them that

these practices would do nothing to entice insurers to expand coverages within Florida. AIF's Financial Securities Council is proud to designate Sen. Al Lawson as its Senate Legislator of the Year.

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### Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink



(D), as one of Florida's cabinet members, has a strong voice in shaping public policy in our state. Following passage of Florida's landmark property insurance reform (HB 1A), CFO Sink began expressing concern over Florida's reliance on assessments, or "hurricane taxes," to pay for deficits resulting from future hurricanes. As such, she proposed fiscally responsible legislation embodied in SB 2156, which reduces the risk of the CAT Fund by \$3 billion. Under current law, the CAT Fund is obligated to issue government revenue bonds in the amount of \$28 billion; but in this unstable economic market, many analysts believe this will be impossible. Unfortunately, this proposal failed during the final days of session. Had it passed, it would have been a great first step toward reducing the threat to all Floridians should a major storm strike our great state. For her commitment to sound fiscal policy and her concern over the potential consequences of assessments on Florida's economic climate, AIF's Financial Securities Council is proud to recognize CFO Alex Sink as a Champion for Business.

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## Florida Energy Council

### Representative Paige Kreegel



(R-Punta Gorda), Chairman of the House Energy Committee, understood from the very beginning the major economic implications

surrounding the omnibus energy package passed by the Florida Legislature. His willingness to consider input from all stakeholders affected by the bill is clearly evident in the final product. His mastery of the complex scientific issues surrounding climate change and renewable energy also came in handy during debate on this contentious bill. His leadership on the issue was evident up to the last days of session when he sponsored a floor amendment requiring the Florida Legislature to ratify any rule established by the Department of Environmental Protection enacting California emission standards for automobiles. For this and many other reasons, AIF's Florida Energy Council is proud to designate Rep. Paige Kreegel as Legislator of the Year.

## Florida Maritime Council

### Representative Kevin Ambler



(R-Tampa) played a large role for AIF's maritime interests during the final days of the 2008 legislative session. On behalf of port tenants across the state, he single-handedly took it upon himself to fight against legislation considered on the floor of the House that could have increased the cost of security screenings for employees working in one of Florida's 14 deepwater ports. Under this proposed legislation, the costs of credentialing would be two to three times the cost of accepting just the existing federal Transportation Workers Identification Credential (TWIC) alone. Rep. Ambler filed floor amendments to this bill that would have allowed Florida ports to accept the federal TWIC card in order to eliminate costly duplicate background checks. AIF's Florida Maritime Council is proud to designate Rep. Kevin Ambler as Legislator of the Year.

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