



2014

# Champions for Business



Votes provide tangible evidence of whether or not a 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.

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, AIF selected those legislators who we deem are strong and forceful advocates for the business community. In our collective wisdom, the Governor and these nine 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.

The *Champion for Business* award symbolizes our gratitude for extraordinary efforts by legislators on behalf of the business community.



**Gov. Rick Scott** is receiving his second AIF Champions for Business Award and is only the second Governor to receive the

award in its 11-year history. As a longtime friend to the business community, Governor Scott proved once again this year to be an ally by signing various pieces of important legislation promoting the state's business climate and helping Florida's families. Perhaps most notably, Governor Scott signed SB 156, which rolled back vehicle registration fees that will save taxpayers \$395 million. This tax reduction was a large portion of Governor Scott's efforts to cut taxes by \$500 million, a goal which he and the Legislature accomplished this session. Under the Governor's leadership, Florida has become one of the most attractive states in which to live and conduct business and AIF is committed to working alongside the Governor to continue this progress.



**Speaker Will Weatherford** (R-Wesley Chapel) is now a four-time recipient of the AIF Champion for Business Award. A

strong advocate for education, Speaker Weatherford played a tremendous role in the passage of HB 851, which extends in-state tuition rates to undocumented students who graduate from a Florida high school or earn a GED. Under Speaker Weatherford's leadership, future generations of Florida's children will be enabled to get a higher education and/or specialized degree, obtain good paying jobs and become contributors to our state's economy. Creating these opportunities for students will ensure an educated workforce and give Florida's businesses a competitive edge.



**Sen. Joe Negron** (R-Palm City) is receiving his fourth AIF Champions for Business Award. His legislation, SB 156, rolls back

vehicle registration fees to pre-September 2009 levels, which will benefit every family or business that owns a vehicle to the tune of \$395 million in reduced taxes. AIF supported SB 156 from its inception because it leaves more money in the pockets of Floridians and encourages growth and job creation for businesses, especially those with a fleet of vehicles.



**Rep. Richard Corcoran** (R-Lutz) is receiving his first AIF Champion for Business Award. Rep. Corcoran is being recognized

for his vital role in protecting step therapy as an approach to control costs and mitigate risk for patients. Step therapy is a progressive approach to drug treatment that says patients should only be prescribed higher cost medication if lower cost, lower risk medications do not work. SB 1354 and HB 7113 were the principal bills proposed that would have negated the benefits of step therapy for patients and businesses alike. Through the efforts of Rep. Corcoran, these bills never passed the House of Representatives.



**Rep. Steve Crisafulli** (R-Merritt Island) is receiving his fourth AIF Champion for Business Award. As the Speaker-designate, Rep. Crisafulli

demonstrated critical leadership by helping to defeat efforts to undermine step therapy. Step therapy is a progressive approach to drug treatment that says patients should only be prescribed higher cost medication if lower cost, lower risk medications do not work. Eliminating this component of managed medical care would dramatically increase health care costs for patients and employers. SB 1354 and HB 7113 were the principal bills intended to make it easier for medical providers to override step therapy procedures. Under Speaker-designate Crisafulli's leadership, these bills were never passed by the Florida House of Representatives.

*Throughout the 60 days of lawmaking, these were the leaders we turned to when the business community needed someone we could depend upon.*



**Sen. Jack Latvala** (R-Clearwater) is receiving his third AIF Champion for Business Award. Sen. Latvala championed the

in-state tuition legislation, HB 851, in the Senate. By sponsoring similar legislation and helping to maneuver HB 851 through the Senate, he has shown his commitment to expanding access to education for all of Florida's students who graduate from a Florida high school or earn a GED. Improving our workforce through education will be a key ingredient of job creation and will also ensure businesses continue to locate to Florida.



**Rep. Seth McKeel** (R-Lakeland) is receiving his second AIF Champion for Business Award. His legislation, HB 7073, aims

to modernize the state's IT infrastructure and ensure Florida is no longer the only state in the nation without a Chief Information Officer. This necessary legislation creates the Agency for State Technology (AST) that will develop and implement information technology standards, develop technology policy and consolidate services where applicable. HB 7073 brings Florida in-line technologically with other states and aims to increase coordination among agencies. The AST will boost bottom lines in Florida's business community through streamlined interactions and increased efficiency.



**Sen. Bill Montford** (D-Tallahassee) is receiving his first AIF Champion for Business Award. Sen. Montford demonstrated his

dedication to protecting Florida's robust agricultural industry when he stood with the industry's stakeholders in order to strengthen food security and keep Florida's agricultural producers competitive.



**Rep. Jeanette Nunez** (R-Miami) is receiving her first AIF Champion for Business Award. This year, Rep. Nunez is being

recognized for sponsoring and passing HB 851, which puts a freeze on rising college tuition and extends in-state tuition rates to all Florida students, regardless of immigration status. Equal access to higher education opportunities will be crucial as our state grows and prospers to guarantee that the growing demand for an educated workforce is met.

*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.*

*The votes provide tangible evidence of whether or not a legislator upholds the ability of Florida companies to operate free of overly burdensome state regulation and taxation.*



**Sen. Jeremy Ring** (D-Margate) is receiving his third AIF Champion for Business Award. Sen. Ring was instrumental in

developing the IT governance legislation that was signed into law this session. Florida was the only state without a Chief Information Officer, which HB 7073 creates along with the Agency for State Technology (AST). The AST with an effective Chief Information Officer at the helm will modernize the state's IT infrastructure, while making data storage and cross-agency communications more efficient. Businesses will benefit from the new agency through simplified interaction with a more efficient government.



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