

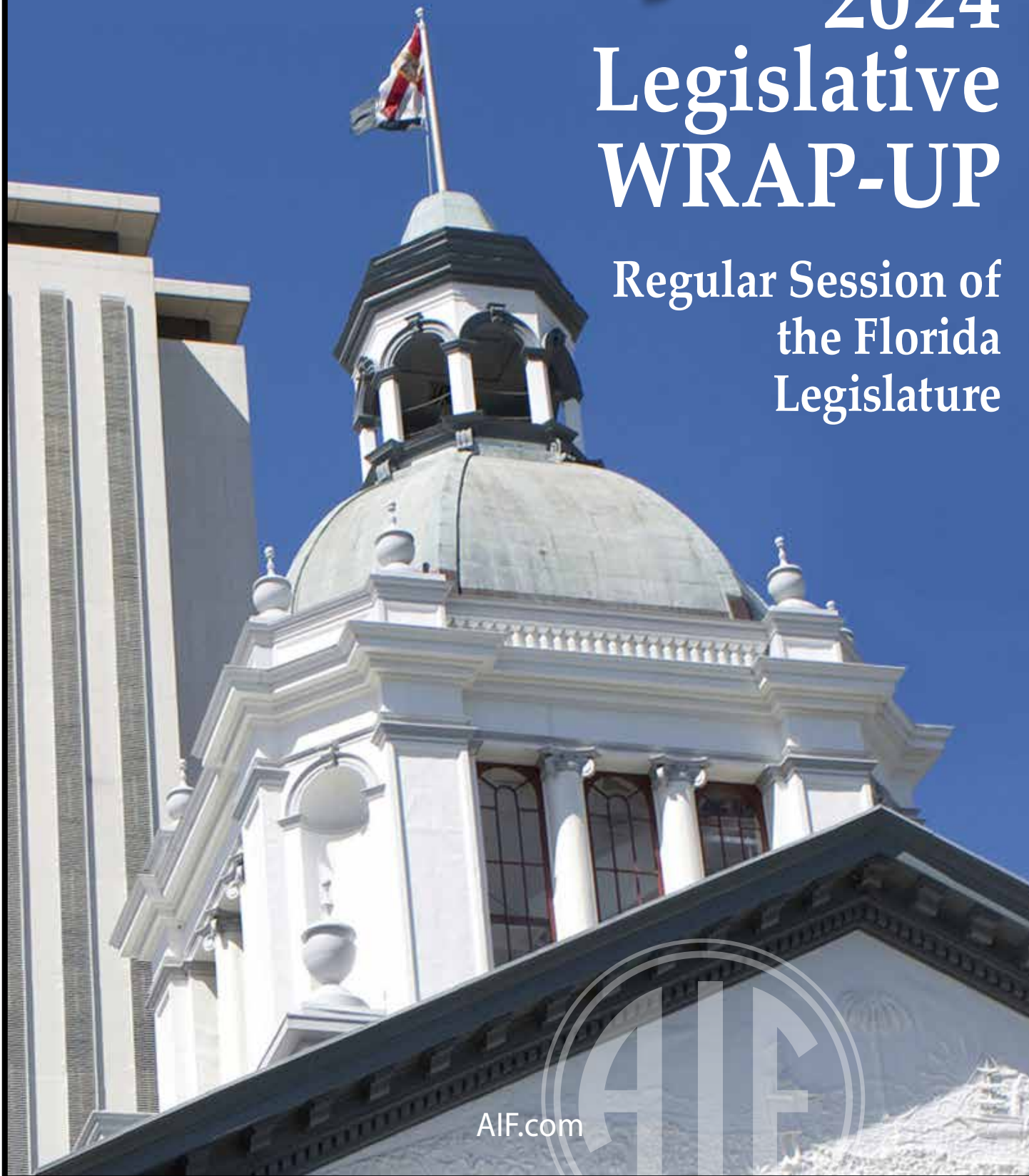
ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA



*The Voice of Florida Business Since 1920*

# 2024 Legislative WRAP-UP

Regular Session of  
the Florida  
Legislature



AIF.com



# 2024 Legislative Session Wrap-Up



**Brewster Bevis**  
President & CEO

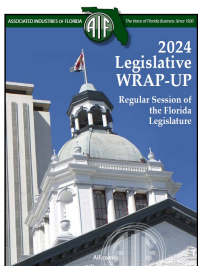


**Adam Basford**  
Vice President –  
Governmental Affairs

The annual Legislative Session has ended after nine weeks of hearings and debates on thousands of bills and hundreds of issues. With more than 60 committees, thousands of bills filed and close to 2,000 registered lobbyists and countless special interest groups all crammed in to nine weeks of work, it makes for a whirlwind of activity.

The 2024 Legislative Session contained several important wins for Florida’s business community, including liability protection in the cybersecurity realm, the prevention of local mandates for heat and wage ordinances, and increased penalties for those who purposely damage Florida’s critical infrastructure.

At Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) our goal is simple—to support the efforts of the men and women who are the employers in our great state, so they can continue to build their business, employ people, and remain the driving force powering Florida’s economic engine. To do that, we are on the front lines in the legislative process—examining every bill, every amendment, and every debate—to advocate for those issues that help and support employers and to strongly oppose those pieces of legislation that will cause harm and weaken our business community.



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# The Issues

The *2024 Legislative Session Wrap-Up* provides a summary of the top issues for the business community during the 2024 Regular Legislative Session. These represent a small portion of all the bills and issues we followed. For more information and to view reports on various other issues, please visit our website at [AIF.com](http://AIF.com).

## Civil Justice

### CYBERSECURITY INCIDENT LIABILITY

House Bill 473 by Representative Mike Giallombardo (R-Cape Coral) passed on March 5 but has not yet been presented to the Governor as of this publication. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect immediately. Senator Nick DiCeglie (R-St. Petersburg) sponsored the Senate companion bill, SB 658.

The bill tackles civil liability from the cybersecurity perspective. As businesses, large and small, continue to rely on data and software to effectively service their customers, frivolous litigation has been on the rise following cyber-attacks on businesses. The bill sets standards for businesses to follow, so if a breach occurs, they are protected from frivolous litigation. Additionally, the bill creates a structure for companies using consumer data to better protect the data from cyberattacks.

**AIF supports legislation** that creates a clear and consistent framework for businesses to follow in order to safeguard consumer privacy and to reduce the risk of frivolous litigation. These measures will create a fair playing field and encourage more businesses to invest in Florida.

### ASBESTOS & SILICA CLAIMS

Senate Bill 720 by Senator Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast) was passed by the Senate but died in House messages. Representative Robbie Brackett (R-Vero Beach) sponsored the House companion, HB 1367.

The bill would have modified the current list of procedures for a plaintiff to follow when filing a lawsuit regarding asbestos exposure. Currently, a written report must be submitted that includes personal information, asbestos exposure locations, an exposed persons employer at the time of the supposed exposure, any asbestos-related conditions associated with the exposure, any documentation that can support the claim, etc.

This bill would require the plaintiff to include information about their smoking history, names and details of anyone who is knowledgeable of the plaintiff's exposure to asbestos, the specific product (type) of asbestos that the plaintiff was exposed to and the location.

**AIF supports legislative initiatives** that reinforce the system of checks and balances in our courts. Access to critical evidence and information is important, especially when the outcome of the case can be determined by the medical history of the plaintiff.

### CLAIMS AGAINST ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

Senate Bill 238 by Senator Colleen Burton (R-Lakeland) died in the Senate Rules Committee. Representative Ryan Chamberlin (R-Belleview) sponsored the House companion, HB 995, which died in the House Health & Human Services Committee.

This bill provided courtroom protections that would have aligned assisted living facilities (ALF's) with statutes that currently protect nursing homes from sue-to-settle litigation. It matched nursing home protections by specifying for ALF's the defendants that can be initially named in a lawsuit, such as the licensee, managing company, active participants, managing employees and direct caregivers. If the plaintiff wanted to add more defendants to the lawsuit, a court would have to hold a special hearing to determine if the proposed defendant was negligent for the case in question. Additionally, the bill matched nursing home statutes in how punitive damages can be sought by requiring a special hearing on admissible evidence as well.

**AIF supports legislation** that promotes civil protection and keeps businesses in line with industry partners. Consistent and reliable liability protections will generate more investment and growth for Florida's economy.

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## LITIGATION FINANCING

Senate Bill 1276 by Senator Jay Collins (R-Tampa) died on the Senate Floor. Representative Tommy Gregory (R-Lakewood Ranch) sponsored the House companion, HB 1179 which died in the House Justice Appropriations Subcommittee.

This bill would have repealed the practice known as litigation financing. Third party litigation financing is an issue that stems from out of state firms funding and controlling litigation in Florida. Firms, operating like Wall Street venture capitalists, find plaintiffs and buy a percentage of a lawsuit. As a co-plaintiff on the case, litigation financiers are able to negotiate the best outcome for their interest, not the plaintiff. In addition to causing widespread and frivolous lawsuits, this practice can cause litigation to be drawn out for years, costing businesses and Floridians billions.

**AIF supports legislation** that ends the practice of litigation financing in Florida. Big money firms profit from suing Florida's businesses, costing billions in nuclear verdicts and massive settlements.

## Environment

### MITIGATION

Senate Bill 1532 by Senator Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) was passed on March 5 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Representative Keith Truenow (R-Tavares) sponsored the House companion, HB 1173. If signed into law, it will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

The bill expands the availability of mitigation bank credits by allowing mitigation banking on public lands. The bill also expands the availability of water quality enhancement areas to private sector end-users. Current law only allows public entities with such access. By doing so, this legislation would add additional tools in the mitigation and compliance "toolbox" for Florida business.

**AIF supports legislation** that expands private-sector involvement in water quality improvements projects. These measures would allow businesses to operate effectively while working alongside regulators on lands/waterways categorized as mitigation banks.

## RATIFICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION'S RULES RELATING TO STORMWATER

Senate Bill 7040 by Senator Debbie Mayfield (R-Melbourne) was passed on March 5 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. The House companion was filed as a Proposed Committee Bill by the House Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee. If signed into law, SB 7040 will go into effect immediately.

In 2021, the Florida Legislature directed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to begin rulemaking on stormwater management's design and operations throughout the state. This rule sets standards for reducing pollution from stormwater runoff. DEP estimates that this rule would increase the cost of development by more than \$2,600 per acre.

As originally drafted, there was concern that the permit application process in the rule could result in protracted delays in receiving permits. After working closely with DEP and legislative leaders, **AIF supported amendments that clarified the intent of the rule and provided a significant amount of certainty in the permit application process.**

### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Senate Bill 738 by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) was passed by the Senate but died in House messages. Representative Toby Overdorf (R-Palm City) sponsored the House companion, HB 789.

This would have promoted the redevelopment of contaminated lands and provided a barrier against frivolous litigation for those abiding by state-issued guidelines.

**AIF supports legislation** that simplifies regulatory patchwork and provides protections against frivolous litigation.



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## Employment

### EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

House Bill 433 by Representative Tiffany Esposito (R-Fort Myers) was passed on March 8 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Jay Trumbull (R-Panama City) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 1492. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

Originally filed to preempt local governments from adding additional ordinances relating to workplace heat exposure requirements, it was amended to include preemptions relating to local wage requirements.

Employers are already required under OSHA regulations to keep the workplace free of serious recognized hazards, including excessive heat. Since there are already clear standards for Florida employers, this bill will prevent another level of regulation in this area and an unlevel regulatory playing field.

Some local governments have enacted ordinances that require businesses to pay mandated wage rates higher than the minimum wage and meet other employment requirements. This bill promotes free market principles and ensures consistency by prohibiting local governments from having any control over the wages or benefits of businesses doing business with the local government. This prohibition will go into effect on September 30, 2026, which coincides with the full implementation of Florida's constitutionally mandated \$15 minimum wage.

HB 433 also prohibits local governments from mandating certain scheduling requirements on private businesses.

**AIF supports** regulatory consistency in workplace safety regulations that prevents a patchwork of local regulations that could include unattainable standards which do little to protect employees while opening an onslaught of fines, penalties, and other punitive measures.

### VERIFICATION OF REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY

House Bill 1289 by Representative Shane Abbott (R-DeFuniak Springs) died on the House Floor. Senator Jay Trumbull (R-Panama City) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 1260, which died in the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee.

The bill would have added guidelines to the existing standards for individuals seeking unemployment assistance and would disqualify individuals that did not take significant steps towards obtaining employment.

Additionally, unless given special exemption for medical or other barriers outside of their control, individuals would be disqualified from receiving unemployment assistance for the following:

- Failure to contact at least 5 employers for job opportunities in a week.
- Failure to appear on three or more occasions for a scheduled job interview.
- Failure to accept a job offer within 2 business days of receiving one.
- Failure to return to a previous job if recalled by the former employer.

**AIF supports legislation** that sets clear guidelines for individuals to follow when seeking unemployment assistance. Florida employers are still dealing with increased workforce shortages; these measures will help more individuals gain employment while alleviating the stalled talent pipeline facing Florida businesses.

### COURT-ORDERED SEALING OF CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS

House Bill 1039 by Representative LaVon Bracy Davis (D-Ocoee) died in the House Justice Appropriations Subcommittee. Senator Tracie Davis (D-Jacksonville) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 1290, which died after not being heard by its committee of reference.

The bill would have expanded Florida's access to court-ordered sealing for individuals with a non-violent criminal record. It would also have reworked existing laws for record sealing in a way that permits those with non-serious offenses greater opportunities to have a record officially sealed.

**AIF supports legislative efforts** to increase a non-serious offender's access to record sealing abilities. Florida, like many other states, continues to face issues with labor shortages. These initiatives will help more people enter the workforce and alleviate ongoing labor issues for businesses throughout the state.

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## General Government

### PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS

House Bill 705 by Representative Jason Shoaf (R-Port St. Joe) was passed on March 4 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 742. If signed into law, this bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

The bill ensures that public works projects that use local funds may not require contractors to pay specific wage rates or provide locally mandated employment benefits. This provision already applies to projects that use state dollars. Some local governments are currently requiring the use of prevailing wage rates in their public works contracts. These requirements can dramatically impact project costs and an employer's flexibility in employment decisions. AIF believes that the state minimum wage requirement and the free market are sufficient to ensure proper wage levels.

**AIF supports legislation** that keeps businesses competing through free market access to public programs.

## Economic Development

### BROADBAND

House Bill 1147 by Representative Josie Tomkow (R-Polk City) was passed on February 22 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 1218. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on June 30, 2024.

In 2021, the legislature passed a law that mandates pole access by local municipal utilities to broadband providers for a fee of one dollar, per pole, per year. The goal of this measure was to broaden rural Florida's access to high-speed internet. However, the 2021 law included a provision that would do away with pole access for broadband providers on July 1, 2024. The bill extends this deadline until December 31, 2028.

**AIF supports** the expansion of broadband services to all Floridians and supports legislation that seeks to promote that goal.

## Business Regulation

### COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

House Bill 1021 by Representative Vicki Lopez (R-Miami) was passed on March 6 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 1178. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

The bill reworks several current provisions in Florida law that govern neighborhood community associations and how they are managed. AIF supported an amendment that added language to set new disclosure requirements for the creation of condominium space in buildings with multiple units. These requirements require a building association to be notified as to which sections of the building will be designated as new condominium space and who is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep for "shared facilities" in the building. This allows for clearly defined roles and consistency in the operation of shared spaces between the businesses and condominium owners.

**AIF supports legislation** that provides clarity and consistency in the relationship between businesses and owners of condominiums.

### FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORMS

Senate Bill 676 by Senator Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island) was passed on March 6 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Representative Lauren Melo (R-Naples) sponsored the House companion, HB 799. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect immediately.

The bill preempts the regulation of food delivery platforms to the State and provides regulatory safeguards for the business relationship between a food delivery platform and a food service establishment. Among the provisions, the bill prohibits a food delivery platform from taking and arranging for the delivery or pickup of orders from a food service establishment without the express consent of that food service establishment. The bill also allows for some guidelines for a restaurant or establishment to be removed from a food delivery platform and creates a channel for better communication between the food service establishment and the consumer.

**AIF supports** streamlining regulations and creating a level regulatory platform that allows businesses to compete fairly.

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## Artificial Intelligence

### ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Senate Bill 1680 by Senator Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island) was passed on March 6 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication.

Representative Fiona McFarland (R-Sarasota) sponsored the House companion, HB 1459. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

This bill creates the “Government Technology Modernization Council.” This council, composed of executive branch agency heads, along with members appointed by the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House, will oversee and advise the Governor and the Legislature on Florida’s rollout of AI in state government and the private sector.

The bill also establishes criminal penalties for using AI platforms for the creation or possession of “generated child pornography.” Such penalties include up to 5 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

**AIF supports** the increased dialogue at the state level about the beneficial elements of AI and how it can have a positive impact on Florida businesses. While creating proper boundaries and guidelines surrounding AI is important, it is also vital that the beneficial uses and innovation created by the proper use of AI are not unnecessarily stifled. **Please visit our website for more information about AIF’s work on AI.**

## Legal & Judicial

### INTENTIONAL DAMAGE TO CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

House Bill 275 by Representative Jennifer Canady (R-Lakeland) was passed on February 28 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville) sponsored the Senate companion, SB 340. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

This bill provides for increased penalties for those who “improperly tamper” with anything defined as “critical infrastructure.” Some examples of “critical infrastructure” include electrical power stations, chemical storage facilities, liquid natural gas storage facilities, deep-water ports, or railyards.

**AIF supports legislation** that deters vandalism, theft, or any form of criminal activity in or around areas of critical infrastructure.

## Transportation

### TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES

Senate Bill 7076 by Senator Blaise Ingoglia (R-Spring Hill) and the Senate Finance and Tax Committee died on the Senate Floor. SB 7076 did not have a House companion bill.

The bill would have reworked a law passed in 2017 that defined transportation network companies (TNC’s) in Florida law and set a robust regulatory framework for TNC’s to follow. A TNC is defined as “an entity that uses a digital network to connect a rider to a TNC driver, who provides prearranged rides.” Since the implementation of this law, there has been a situation where one airport set significantly higher per-trip pickup fees for TNC’s.

Additionally, the bill ensures that all airports charge the same fees by prohibiting them from charging a pickup fee before the time the passenger enters the vehicle. In no case would the bill allow a fee to be greater than the lowest pickup fee charged to a taxicab company operating in the airport’s jurisdiction.

**AIF supports legislation** that provides for regulatory certainty and consistency in competitive markets.

### TOWING & STORAGE

House Bill 179 by Representative Melony Bell (R-Fort Meade) was passed on March 1 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Senator Keith Perry (R-Gainesville) sponsored the Senate companion, Senate Bill 774. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

This bill seeks to curb predatory towing practices hurting Florida’s businesses and consumers. Among other provisions, the bill clarifies the fees that towing companies may charge, increases the time frame for a towing company to sell an unclaimed vehicle to ensure consumers have time to retrieve it, and prohibits towing companies from requiring only notarized original titles that are appropriate for securing the release of a vehicle.

**AIF supports legislation** that sets clear guidelines for businesses and consumers to follow. These measures will reduce the amount of rampant litigation while keeping businesses in line with their obligations to the consumer.

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## Agriculture

### HOUSING FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Senate Bill 1082 by Senator Jay Collins (R-Tampa) was passed on March 5 but has not yet been signed into law as of this publication. Representative Kaylee Tuck (R-Lake Placid) sponsored the House companion, HB 1051. If signed into law, the bill will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

This bill addresses several housing issues that directly impact agricultural operations in the state, and creates building and living conditions standards for agricultural worker housing. It also would make it unlawful for a local government to inhibit the construction or installment of housing for H-2A program workers.

**AIF supports legislation** that provides protections for farmers against authoritative local governments that impose regulations that are overbearing and impede the functionality of agricultural producers.

## Energy

### ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Senate Bill 480 by Senator Nick DiCeglie (R-St. Petersburg) died in House messages. Representative Brad Yeager (R-New Port Richey) sponsored the House companion, HB 683.

Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) continues to expand its presence in Florida's economy as it becomes a more practical and cost-effective source of renewable energy. The bill would have granted public utilities with a cost-recovery mechanism for qualifying RNG infrastructure projects and encouraged further solutions for the capture, sale, and reuse of methane gas.

**AIF supports legislation** that provides an economically and technically feasible framework which encourages development and investment in renewable natural gas, hydrogen, and other energy technologies.

## Health Care

### HEALTH CARE

Senate Bills 7016 and 1718 sponsored by Senators Colleen Burton (R-Lakeland) and Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart) were signed into law by the Governor on March 21, 2024. House Majority Leader Michael Grant (R-Port Charlotte) sponsored the House companion, HB 1549 and Representative Karen Gonzalez Pittman (R-Tampa) sponsored the other companion, HB 1501.

This package, commonly referred to as "Live Healthy," was Senate President Kathleen Passidomo's top priority bill this year. The bill made significant reforms to Florida's healthcare system by establishing new programs for the training and development of new professionals in the healthcare industry. Some of the initiatives provide for student loan assistance, expanded telehealth services, and the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact that allows licensed healthcare professionals from other states to practice in Florida. It also incentivizes innovation in the health care industry through significant investments in technology.

The Live Healthy package will invest almost \$1.2 billion to greatly expand Florida's healthcare workforce and provide innovative solutions to the shortage of desperately needed healthcare professionals.

**AIF supports legislation** that invests in and expands Florida's healthcare and incentivizes innovation through technology.

### MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

Senate Bill 248 by Senator Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville) died in the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee. The bill did not have a House companion.

This bill would have created certain conditions in which a parent or child of a deceased relative could recover damages if medical malpractice was found to be the cause of death for the victim. Additionally, the bill would have imposed a cap on noneconomic damages in medical malpractice cases, to attempt to address Florida's high medical malpractice premiums as well as physician recruitment and retention.

**AIF supports legislation** that protects businesses from inflated or "nuclear" verdicts that, in many circumstances, far exceed the economic repercussions to the victim. Limiting non-economic damages will promote critical access for those seeking medical care.



## BILLS OF CONCERN

AIF monitors what is often lost when assessing the bills that would affect the business community and would be incredibly harmful to Florida's employers. While you don't hear about such bills, it is always important for the business community to know that there are Legislators that seriously want these types of harmful bills to not only be filed, but to pass the legislature and become a law.

This is why AIF takes notice of every bill filed in the Florida legislature each session, to make sure these kinds of bills do not slip by.

**HB 193 & SB 144 by Representative Anna Eskamani (D-Orlando) and Senator Lori Berman (D-Boca Raton)** would eliminate the exploration, permitting, or drilling for petroleum and natural gas. The bill would also eliminate existing and future permits for facilities used for drilling, production, or transport of petroleum or natural gas. If passed, this bill would abolish Florida's access to critically needed energy products and infrastructure.

**SB 510 by Senator Linda Stewart (D-Orlando)** would impose an "excise tax" on water that is extracted for commercial use. If passed, this law would result in higher

costs for industries that provide critically needed services for Florida consumers. Florida accounts for roughly twenty-five percent of all water withdrawals for drinking water, agricultural purposes, irrigation, power generation, etc.

**HB 995 & SB 762 by Representative Michael Gottlieb (D-Davie) and Senator Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg)** would enshrine locally proposed heat ordinance measures for businesses into Florida law. These measures would supersede the current standards already issued by OSHA for outdoor working conditions in elevated temperatures.

**SB 106 & and HB 35 by Senator Shevrin Jones (D-Miami Gardens) and Representative Joel Rudman (R-Navarre)** would prohibit businesses from implementing fees on cash transactions and require businesses to accept cash payments. This proposal would have unnecessarily burdened businesses that are unable to accept cash payments due to the infrastructure or physical locations of the business.

## Taking Care of Business for More Than 100 Years.

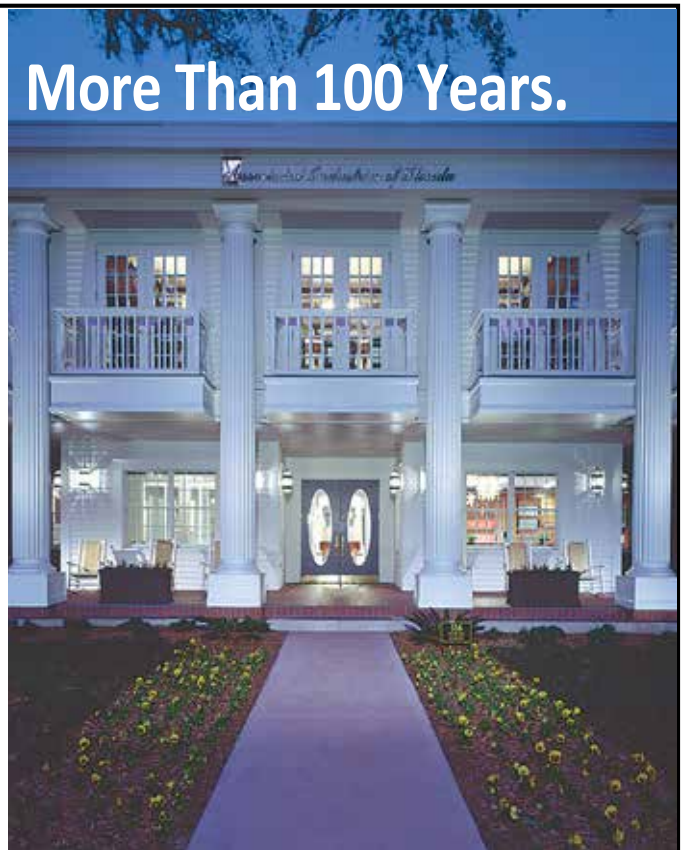
Government is full of people who have never run a business, turned a profit, or met a payroll. And that's why Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) exists.

Whenever politicians and bureaucrats gather, AIF is there to protect your business against new laws and regulations that stifle the energy and creativity of the free-market. AIF minds your business in the state capital so that you can concentrate on providing the services and products Floridians want and need.

AIF provides you with the support and the tools you need to defend yourself against attacks on your business' bottom line.

To learn more about AIF membership services and/or apply for membership, please contact:

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