

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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Service First – Civil Service Reform

A virtual filibuster by *Sen. Al Lawson (D-Tallahassee)* blocked a vote Thursday in the Senate Governmental Oversight and Productivity Committee on the bill to improve service to taxpayers from state employees, SB 466 by committee *Chairman Rudy Garcia (R-Hialeah)*. The delay in approval is temporary. The bill can come up at the committee meeting next Tuesday or, with the approval of *Senate President John McKay (R-Bradenton)*, can be withdrawn from the Governmental Oversight & Productivity Committee and sent directly to the Appropriations Committee. The bill, which is Gov. Jeb Bush's Service First plan, was clearly headed for approval. Amendments by *Sen. Richard Mitchell (D-Jasper)* and Lawson to weaken or gut the bill were all voted down 4-3 on party lines.

Chairman Garcia led the committee through 19 other bills before reaching his state employee reform measure in the final hour of the meeting. Lawson offered a series of amendments and insisted on discussing and considering each one until the time for adjournment arrived. A much ballyhooed large turnout of opponents failed to develop and the committee room was less than half full. A few spectators in the committee room dolefully wore hand-written labels, which read "Service Worse."

The committee approved, also on 4-3 party lines, amendments spelling out details for employees serving at the discretion of managers and putting the burden on employees who are removed to prove that the action was discriminatory, similar to law governing the private sector.

AIF supports the Governor's Service First plan. Not only does it hold the prospect of treating our civil service employees better; it promotes efficiency and accountability within the civil service system. Florida's employers, who interact with the state every day, would benefit tremendously from a motivated, lean and highly professional state employee force. In addition, the savings realized to the state in state employee reductions and added efficiency would save employer's tens, even hundreds of millions of tax dollars in the long term.

Governor and Cabinet Reorganization

The House Council for Competitive Commerce approved PCS/CS/HB 681 by *Rep. Fred Brummer (R-Apopka)* and others to carry out the 1998 constitutional revision to merge the offices of Treasurer and Comptroller. The bill brings the Cabinet functions of those two positions together as Chief Financial Officer and creates a separate department under the Governor and Cabinet to carry out their regulatory functions. The council amended the bill to return to the original form of having three commissioners who would regulate insurance, banking and financial services. The bill previously was amended to have banking and financial services regulated by the same commissioner. At the request of Comptroller Bob Milligan, the Senate Governmental Oversight and Productivity Committee approved a similar bill, SB 1886 by *Sen. Debby Sanderson (R-Fort Lauderdale)*. However, the same committee adopted an entirely different plan, CS/SB 1970 and 164 by *Sen. Jack Latvala (R-Palm Harbor)* last week, that places the financial and regulatory functions and responsibilities solely under the elected Chief Financial Officer.

As the session progresses, AIF hopes that the Senate will opt for the merits of SB 1886 as the best possible arrangement for the state of Florida. This proposed structure provides for the simplification and consolidation of governance, a desire expressed by the vote of the people in 1998, while at the same time providing for the necessary public and legislative oversight of the executive director and, by extension, the department deputy selection process. In addition, this structure provides for a fair and equitable regulatory environment for the insurance, securities and banking industries while in no way diminishing the historic oversight and enforcement authority practiced by the current Treasurer and Comptroller.

Government Accountability

SB 822 was passed by the Senate Governmental Oversight & Productivity Committee today. Among other provisions, the bill provides limitations on contingency fee contracts for private attorney services. The bill requires that a private attorney who contracts with the state maintain documents and records and that the attorney makes such documents and records available for inspection.

Associated Industries of Florida supports the provisions of this bill outlined above. The Florida business community has a compelling interest in seeing to it that Florida's tax dollars are administered in a fair and equitable manner, particularly as it relates to any state legal action against a private sector entity. In addition, public scrutiny of the retention of private counsel and the contractual arrangements established may assist in insuring that the state does not gratuitously seek legal remedy without an adequate policy debate.

This report was prepared by Curt Leonard, Manager – Governmental Affairs at Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) and Jere Moore, AIF Reporter. Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850)224-7173.

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