

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



P.O. Box 784 • Tallahassee, FL 32302 • Phone: (850) 224-7173 • Fax: (850) 224-6532 • Internet: <http://aif.com> • fbnnet.com

APRIL 3, 2006

ENERGY

The Senate Environmental Preservation Committee passed SB 888 by Senator Lee Constantine (R-Altamonte Springs). This comprehensive piece of legislation establishes an Energy Plan for the state of Florida and encompasses many of the recommendations of the Governor's recent energy initiative. The bill creates a Florida Energy Commission and establishes membership and duties. It also provides grants to promote renewable energy technologies and rebates for certain appliances and solar installations. SB 888 also streamlines and shortens time frames for the siting of power plants, nuclear plants and transmission lines. Finally it creates the "Food to Fuel" program to provide grants to promote use of Florida grown and produced biomass to produce energy.

At the outset of the meeting, Senator Constantine remarked that he had tried to balance all the concerns from members of the environmental community, local governments, and the energy industry. In addition, he explained how this bill was built upon four pillars for addressing the issue of energy: (1) energy reliability, (2) energy conservation, (3) energy diversity, and (4) affordability of energy. Several amendments were offered during the meeting most of which were technical in nature. There was one amendment dealing with the re-write of the siting act (the law which governs where electrical and nuclear power plants can be located) which seemed to cause some concern. Unfortunately, the committee was running short on time so many of the speakers who were in opposition to the amendment were not allowed to speak. This led to some grumbling among the audience. Chairman Paula Dockery (R-Lakeland) apologized for running out of time but asked the committee members to vote for the bill so that more work could be done to fix some of the areas of concern.

Senator Gary Siplin (D-Orlando) asked the sponsor why the bill eliminated local land use hearings. Senator Constantine responded by saying that the bill did not eliminate land use hearings; instead it contains provisions for streamlining them. Senator Siplin then asked why the bill exempted nuclear power plants from the competitive bid process. Senator Constantine explained that this was in the bill so that nuclear power plants would be considered as a viable option when considering the construction of a new power plant. He further stated that nuclear power typically loses out to the more accepted coal and natural gas plants and that this might help nuclear plants become more of an option.

SB 888 will now be heard by the Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee.

AIF is closely monitoring this landmark piece of legislation. As the bill has moved through the process some amendments have been added that raise some concern for utility companies. AIF believes the best way to deal with the state's energy needs is through the use of incentives and the removal of regulatory barriers, rather than using new taxes and mandates.

BUSINESS REGULATION

The Senate Regulated Industries Committee unanimously passed SB 1336 Relating to Building Codes/Wind Design by Senator Lee Constantine (R-Altamonte Springs). This bill authorizes the Florida Building Commission to change the wind design standards contained in the Florida Building Code and to identify within the code those areas in the panhandle that are subject to the windborne debris requirements of the code. The bill also stipulates that new windborne debris requirements for the Panhandle region may not take effect for six months following completion of rule-making or May 31, 2007, whichever is sooner.

SB 1336 has passed all its committees of reference and will now be heard on the floor of the Senate.

AIF supports the efforts of Senator Constantine to address this very important issue. Although in the short term this bill will probably add to the cost of a new home, this increase in cost could be offset by the benefit of reduced hurricane-related property damage.

OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST

Ethics and Elections

The Senate Environmental Preservation Committee unanimously passed SB 208 by Senator Carey Baker (R-Eustis). This bill would require that any location that sells hunting, fishing, or trapping licenses, therefore acting as a sub-agent of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to have voter registration cards available for those individuals purchasing these licenses. A strike-everything amendment was adopted which slightly changed the bill. The new language allows sub-agents to ask license-seekers whether they want a voter registration form but it does not allow these sub-agents to help fill out the registration cards or collect them.

There was some concerns with the bill especially from Democratic committee members, which lead Senator Baker to assure that he would be open to any suggestions.

SB 208 will now be heard by the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee.

Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850)224-7173.

- For more information on all of the important legislative information concerning the business community, go to our “members only” Florida Business Network web site at <http://fbnnet.com>
- Send us your E-mail address and we will begin to send this report to you automatically via E-mail.