

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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APRIL 5, 2007

The House Policy & Budget Council held another marathon meeting today. On the agenda were several bills of importance to AIF and the business community including; legislation on regional transportation authorities, incentives for the film industry in Florida, and two bills that use market-based solutions to help reduce the cost of health insurance for our employers.

Economic Development

The House Policy & Budget Council passed HB 1325 Relating to Entertainment Industry Economic Development by Representative Don Davis (R-Jacksonville Beach). The bill provides economic development incentives for the entertainment industry. The bill substantially amends the Entertainment Industry Financial Incentive Program from a cash reimbursement to a transferable tax credit that can be applied against corporate income tax and sales and use tax liability effective July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010. The bill provides a minimum of \$75 million in tax credits for each fiscal year. A tax credit can be sold at no less than 75 percent of its worth and may be carried forward for a maximum of five years. In order for film and television productions to benefit from these incentives they must show proof that they have contracted with employers from Florida and that they have purchased goods and services in Florida.

An amendment by Representative Dick Kravitz (R-Orange Park) renamed the bill in honor of Representative Davis' 15-year commitment to expanding the entertainment industry in Florida. Representative Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park) who presented the bill in place of Representative Davis also offered an amendment, which was adopted, that capped the amount of tax credits at \$25 million per year for a total of 3 years.

HB 1325 is now ready to be considered on the House floor for final passage.

AIF supports legislation that encourages growth in Florida's emerging film industry. The unequivocal success of this program is hard to ignore. Attracting large-scale film and entertainment productions to Florida is a boon to our economy.

Transportation

The House Policy & Budget Council passed HB 251 Relating to Bay Area Regional Transportation by Representative Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton). The purpose of the bill is to take a more regional approach to transportation planning in west central Florida by creating a regional

transportation authority. The counties under the authority's jurisdiction would include Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Sarasota. The bill describes appointments to the authority as area business people as well as local elected officials, a metropolitan planning organization member and participation from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The objective of the legislation is to create a new entity able to overcome the parochial pitfalls of addressing infrastructure needs on a county by county basis. The authority's purview would include entering into public-private partnerships (P3s), building limited access toll expressways, developing mass transit and more.

During the meeting Representative Galvano offered a series of amendments most of which were technical in nature. One non-technical amendment that was adopted precludes the regional transportation authority from enacting any tolls on existing roads, expressways, or highways.

HB 251 is now ready to be considered on the House floor for final passage.

AIF supports the ability of multi-county areas in Florida to enter into regional transportation authorities. These authorities are empowered by this legislation to implement infrastructure improvements and to increase consideration for vital transportation corridors, seaports, airports and other regionally significant business centers.

Health Care

The House Policy & Budget Council passed two bills, which seek to find creative ways to reduce the cost of health insurance in our state. The first of these bills is HB 1401 Relating to Health Flex Plans by Representative Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City). HB 1401, one of the Speaker's 100 Ideas for Florida, expands health flex plan eligibility from 200 to 250 percent of the federal poverty level (the current federal poverty level is \$20,650) thereby increasing the number of people who can become eligible for these types of plans. The bill also permits health flex plans to access the employee group market, in certain circumstances. An amendment was adopted during the previous committee meeting that provides for an appropriation of \$250,000 in non-recurring general revenue to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) to award Small business Health Insurance Plan Grants to eligible businesses.

In his closing, Representative Patronis admitted that this proposal is not the silver bullet for addressing the issue of Florida's uninsured. Health Flex Plans do not provide the same level of coverage as normal health insurance, but they do at least establish a relationship between low-income employees and health care providers. According to Representative Patronis, "Health Flex Plans are not a substitute for insurance, but they are a good first step towards helping those who normally wouldn't have any type of coverage."

HB 1401 is now ready to be considered for final passage on the House floor.

AIF supports the market-based solutions to the problem of Florida's uninsured found in HB 1401. According to a study by the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA), approximately 19% of all Floridians do not have health insurance. These individuals typically rely on emergency rooms for their primary care. Unfortunately, this kind of care is the most expensive option. Expanding access for low income employees to health flex plans is sound public policy.

The committee also unanimously passed HB 1121 Relating to the Florida Health Information Network by Representative Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring). The bill creates the Florida Health Information Network Corporation as a public/private partnership that will establish a secure, privacy-protected, and integrated statewide network for the communication of electronic health information. This not-for-profit corporation will be managed by an uncompensated board of directors that will consist of 15 members. In addition, the bill authorizes the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to implement the plan.

Representative Michael Grant (R-Port Charlotte) asked Representative Grimsley if her bill would reduce Medicaid costs. Representative Grimsley replied that indeed it would because the establishment of this type of information network would likely prevent emergency room physicians from repeating medical tests unnecessarily by allowing them to access an individual's most up to date medical records.

HB 1121 will now be considered for final passage on the House floor.

AIF supports the creation of Health Information Network, which will increase efficiency and reduce the number of unnecessary treatments. The creation of a statewide network for the exchange of electronic medical records may result in substantial savings, therefore reducing the cost of health insurance for employers and their employees.

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.