



DAILY BRIEF

From March 1, 2012

A partisan showdown unfolded in both the House & Senate today as each chamber took up a number of controversial issues. Such proposals varied from education reform to the outright elimination of internet sweepstakes in Florida. Among the heated debate, AIF closely monitored the following:

- In the House, members debated an education measure that would empower parents to step in and revive chronically failing schools in Florida. HB 1191 by Representative Michael Bileca (R-Miami), a measure that AIF supports, is a meaningful step forward to improve foundational skills and readiness for college and careers.
- HB 4001 by Representative Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) was also met with opposition by members of the minority party. This legislation would repeal the Florida Climate Protection Act and eliminate costs to Florida businesses resulting from a state cap-and-trade program – a move strongly supported by AIF and the business community.

If you haven't already, be sure to follow AIF on Twitter for up-to-the minute news and updates on the business community's top priorities. As we approach the final week of the 2012 Legislative Session, AIF will be tweeting breaking news, press statements and media alerts as they happen in the halls!

Energy

On Thursday, the full House passed HB 4001 by Representative Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) that would repeal the Florida Climate Protection Act, which passed in 2008. The 2008 law directed the Department of Environmental Protection to create a cap-and-trade program for the State; however, the Department never created a plan after a fiscal analysis showed that the cost to both the public and private sectors would be prohibitive.

HB 4001 passed by a vote of 82-34, falling largely along partisan basis with Democrats voting in opposition.

HB 4001 will now proceed to the Senate for consideration by its members. An identical measure in the Senate – SB 648 by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) – awaits hearing on the Senate calendar and will likely be substituted for final passage in the coming days.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will repeal the establishment of a “cap-and-trade” program for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Education

On Thursday, the House took up a controversial education measure that passed largely along party lines by a vote of 80-34.

HB 1191 Relating to Parental Empowerment in Education by Representative Michael Bileca (R-Miami) enables parents, by petition, to request that the school district implement a parent-selected turnaround option if a school in the lowest performing category does not improve performance in the initial year of implementing a turnaround option selected by the school district. The turnaround option requested by parents must be considered for implementation by the district school board at a publicly noticed meeting if the petition is signed and dated by a majority of the parents of eligible students, i.e., students enrolled in the school or students who are scheduled for assignment to the school in the following school year.

Within 30 days of receiving notice from the Department of Education (DOE) that the school did not improve performance under the preceding turnaround option, each school district must notify parents that they may submit a petition requesting that a parent-selected turnaround option be implemented for the school in the following school year. Proponents, including Representative Marti Coley (R-Marianna) stated that the measure "gives parents that voice they need to make sure their children are receiving the best education possible."

HB 1191 will now proceed to the Senate Chamber for consideration by its members. The Senate companion – SB 1718 by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto (R-Wellington) – is currently in the Senate Budget Committee.

AIF will continue to SUPPORT legislative changes that will increase digital learning and improve foundational skills and readiness for college and careers.

Environmental

Legislation concerning onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems made significant progress in both the House & Senate on Thursday.

First, the full House approved HB 999 by Representative Chris Dorworth (R-Heathrow) with over two-thirds of the Chamber's approval. This proposed legislation repeals the statewide onsite sewage treatment and disposal system inspection program that was created in 2010. Under this bill, local governments will decide whether they want to have an inspection program for septic tanks. If a county has a first magnitude spring, they will have to pass an ordinance to "opt-out" of the program and all other local governments will have to "opt-in" to the program. In addition, local governments will decide who will conduct the inspections. There is a grandfather clause for those local governments with inspection programs already in place.

HB 999 will now proceed to the Senate for final consideration by its members.

In the Senate, SB 820 by Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness) was approved by the Senate Budget Committee. Previously identical to its House counterpart, SB 820 was amended during consideration on Thursday. The first amendment by Senator Don Gaetz (R-Destin) changed the requirement that a local government must either "opt-in" or "opt-out" with 60% of the vote of the elected commission. The second amendment also offered by Senator Gaetz will prohibit a local government from mandating a high performance septic system until the study on the impact of septic tanks is completed.

Similar to its counterpart in the House, SB 820 is also ready for consideration on the Senate Floor. The bill will likely be substituted for HB 999 and voted on for final passage before proceeding to the Governor to be signed into law.

AIF SUPPORTS onsite sewage treatment and disposal legislation that is both workable and mindful of environmental sustainability. AIF has been working closely with the Florida Home Builders Association and the Florida Association of Realtors on this proposal.