



WEEKLY BRIEF

From the Week of February 20 – 24, 2012

Week 7 comes to a close following the passage of the House & Senate's respective budget proposals for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-2013. After refusing to concur with the House's budget recommendations – a common practice in the legislative budget process – the Senate acceded to request for conference committee. Budget conference is anticipated to commence next week and carry policymakers into the final days of session.

In the last full week of committee hearings, AIF experienced victory on multiple fronts. Some of the top priorities that saw passage this week include:

- HB 511 Relating to Workers' Compensation by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples) and its Senate companion – SB 668 by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) passed their respective committees this week. One of AIF's top priorities for 2012. This legislation focuses on correcting a loophole in the workers' compensation system that allows physicians to dispense repackaged drugs and charge employers exorbitant prices that greatly exceed the statutory reimbursement for the same pharmaceuticals dispensed by pharmacies. The existing loophole allows repackaged or relabeled prescription drugs to be dispensed at rates up to 679% more than what a pharmacy would charge.
(View AIF's Statement on Passage of HB 511)
- HB 503 Relating to Environmental Regulation by Representative Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City) was passed by the full House on Thursday with unanimous consent. This legislation is critical for Florida's employers because it will help accelerate the approval or denial process and bring certainty to business dealing with state agencies.
- HB 1393 Relating to Taxation of Transient Rentals by Representative Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) was temporarily postponed from consideration again this week, marking a large victory for AIF and the business community. This legislation will unduly provide special tax relief to Online Travel Companies (OTCs) over Florida-based hotels and motels as it relates to remitting income taxes on the cost of hotel rooms. (Read AIF's Position on this issue).

Finally – if you haven't already, be sure to check out this week's episode of *AIFTV*. We are proud to bring you an exclusive interview with Representative Eric Eisnaugle (R-Orlando). Rep. Eisnaugle is the House sponsor of HB 1003, a measure that will reduce the tangible personal property (TPP) tax and provide significant tax relief for Florida's small business employers.

Workers' Compensation

On Friday, February 24th members of the House Economic Affairs Committee passed HB 511 Relating to Workers' Compensation with near unanimous consent.

Sponsored by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples), HB 511 focuses on addressing a loophole in the Workers' Compensation system that allows physicians to dispense repackaged drugs and charge

employers exorbitant prices that greatly exceed the statutory reimbursement for the same pharmaceuticals dispensed by pharmacies. The existing loophole allows repackaged or relabeled prescription drugs to be dispensed at rates up to 679% more than what a pharmacy would charge. In fact, it has been estimated that HB 511 will have the potential to save private sector employers \$62 million in workers' compensation rates.

This legislation represents a significant compromise between all interested parties including members of the business community, physicians and pharmacists. This compromise will maintain the estimated \$62 cost savings for employers while continuing to ensure that physicians are not inhibited or discouraged from dispensing repackaged drugs.

AIF's Workers' Compensation Coalition and its more than 60 members have made the drug repackaging issue one of their major priorities for the upcoming Legislative Session. HB 511 will establish fairness with workers' compensation prescription drug reimbursement rates, reduce the rising workers' compensation rates that Florida businesses are being forced to pay and ensure that workers' compensation patients receive premium medical treatment.

The Senate companion – SB 668 by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) – was also passed this week by the Senate Health Regulation Committee. SB 668 is expected to come forward for consideration in the Senate Budget Committee – its final committee stop – on Tuesday, February 28th.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will reduce Florida employers' workers' compensation costs while helping Florida restore its vibrant economic position. Furthermore, we commend Rep. Hudson and members of the House Economic Affairs Committee for their favorable support and for recognizing that the impact of the current loophole, if left unchanged, is detrimental to Florida's employers.

Insurance

On Friday February 24th, the House Economic Affairs Committee took up one of AIF's top insurance priorities that has garnered widespread support from Governor Rick Scott and Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, among others.

HB 119 Relating to Motor Vehicle Insurance by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton) changes Florida's mandatory Personal Injury Protection (PIP) insurance requirement to a new Emergency Medical Care Coverage requiring an individual injured in an automobile accident to go to a hospital or to their doctor within 78 hours in order to receive reimbursement for the cost of treatment.

In addition, the bill caps claimant attorneys' fees to reduce litigation and contains several provisions to combat fraud. With these provisions, the bill will reduce the cost of this mandatory coverage while providing for meaningful coverage for medical treatment in the event of an accident. "If we do nothing, PIP rates are projected to rise 30% over the next year," explained Rep. Boyd.

Following passage, HB 119 is now prepared for consideration on the House Floor.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation to reduce Personal Injury Protection (PIP) claims costs. Furthermore, AIF applauds Representative Boyd for his leadership in crafting a proposal that will effectively reduce fraud and save Florida's consumers millions in PIP premiums.

On Thursday February 23rd, the full House of Representatives approved HB 1127 Relating to Citizens Property Insurance Corporation by Representative Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) by a vote of 89-25.

This legislation reduces the Citizens Property Insurance Corporation's (Citizens) maximum regular assessment from 6 percent to 2 percent which may be levied on most businesses' property and liability insurance premiums for claims paying deficits resulting from a hurricane. Current law requires insurers to pay the regular assessment within 30 days which in turn surcharge their customers to recoup amounts paid. The reduction of the regular assessment will not reduce the overall assessment authority of Citizens. Greater levies will be imposed through emergency assessments which are spread out over multiple years reducing the financial burden on businesses and insurers.

HB 1127 will now proceed to the Senate for a vote by its members. The Senate companion measure – SB 1346 by Senator Steve Oelrich (R-Gainesville) – has one final stop in the Senate Budget Committee.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation to return Citizens to an insurer of last resort. AIF also SUPPORTS restoring the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (Cat Fund) to a safety buffer for Andrew-sized storms.

Growth Management

On Tuesday February 21st, the Senate Budget Committee took up and unanimously passed SB 704 Relating to Building Construction and Inspection by Senator Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton).

SB 704 bill provides in part that if a building code administrator or building official provide for electronic filing, then construction plans, drawings, specifications, reports, final documents, or documents prepared or issued by a licensee may be dated and electronically signed and sealed by the licensee and transmitted electronically to the building code administrator or building official for approval.

In addition, the bill also expands the definition of “contractor” to include those persons or businesses that contract to demolish any residence or building. Currently, contractor licensure to demolish buildings and residences only applies when these particular structures are over three stories tall.

SB 704 will now proceed to the Senate Floor. An similar measure in the House – HB 651 by Representative Daniel Davis (R-Jacksonville)– was overwhelmingly passed in the House Economic Affairs Committee on Wednesday.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will generate cost savings resulting from efficiencies associated with electronic filing.

On Wednesday February 22nd, the House Economic Affairs Committee took up HB 979 Relating to Developments of Regional Impact by Representative Jose Felix Diaz (R-Miami).

This legislation contains several provisions, including direction stating that reviewing agencies may make only recommendations or comments regarding a proposed development which are consistent with the statutes, rules, or adopted local government ordinances that are applicable to developments in the jurisdiction where the proposed development is located.

In addition, the proposal includes a new exemption from the process which applies to any proposed development that is located in a local government jurisdiction that:

- Does not qualify for an exemption based on the population and density criteria in s. 257 380.06(29)(a)
- Is approved as a comprehensive plan amendment adopted pursuant to s. 163.3184(4),
- Qualifies for an incentive program pursuant to chapter 288; *and*

- That the developer, local government, and Department of Economic Opportunity agree in writing that the development-of-regional- impact review process does not apply.

Passing with unanimous consent, HB 979 will now advance to the House Floor.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that allows developers, local governments, and the newly created Department of Economic Opportunity DEO to elect to use the state coordinated review process for certain developments and thus provide significant cost and time savings for private developers.

On Thursday February 23rd, the House took up and passed HB 1013 by Representative Frank Artiles (R-Miami) by a vote of 106 to 10.

There is a common law implied warranty of fitness and merchantability or habitability related to the purchase of improved real estate purchased from the builder. This common law implied warranty applies to buildings and other improvements which are affixed to the real property, as opposed to fixtures that can be removed from the real property without damage to the premises.

A recent District Court of Appeal (DCA) decision expanded the common law implied warranty of fitness and merchantability or habitability to off-site improvements, such as roads and drainage areas within a subdivision. This opinion is contrary to a previous Florida Supreme Court opinion. This bill provides that the implied warranty of fitness and merchantability or habitability does not include off-site improvements.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2012, and applies to all cases accruing before, pending on, or filed after that date.

HB 1013 now advances to the Senate where its companion, SB 1196 by Senator Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton), has one more stop in the Senate Budget Committee before proceeding to the Floor.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will provide clarity as it relates to warranty obligations, thus promoting a more decisive environment for conducting business in Florida.

Information Technology

On Tuesday, the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee unanimously passed SB 678 Relating to State Contracts by Senator Chris Smith (D-Oakland Park). Sen. Smith explained that this legislation would simply require any company doing business with the State of Florida to have call centers located within the United States.

SB 678 is now ready for consideration on the Floor. The House proposal – HB 649 by Representative Betty Reed (D-Tampa)– has yet to be heard in the House Government Operations Subcommittee.

AIF OPPOSES legislation that will create another layer of government regulation that interferes with a businesses' freedom to control costs and provide state services at the lowest possible price.

Environmental

On Wednesday February 22nd, the House State Affairs Committee overwhelmingly approved HB 999 by Representative Chris Dorworth (R-Heathrow).

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” 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 cleared its final committee of reference and is now ready for the House calendar.

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.

Several proposals addressing the issue of metal theft were also considered on Wednesday. Metal theft is plaguing our state and AIF has been working with the Floridians for Copper & Metal Crime Prevention Coalition since 2008 fighting this crime. On Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved two of them.

HB 1323 by Representative Brad Drake (R-DeFuniak Springs) increases the penalty for those secondary metal recyclers who knowingly and intentionally accept stolen materials from a misdemeanor of the first degree to a felony of the third degree. It also places the same penalty on a person who knowingly and intentionally removes, or assists with the removal of certain metals from an electrical substation without authorization of the utility. Finally, the bill sets a definition for an “electrical substation” in the statute.

Substations across the state have been vandalized by metal theft costing the utility and rate payers hundreds of thousands of dollars in replacement of parts and repairs. Hopefully with the increased penalty, thieves will think twice before committing this crime.

The other metal theft priority measure approved on Wednesday was HB 885 by Representative Clay Ford (R-Pensacola). This legislation aims to prevent metal theft by clarifying permissible types of personal identification necessary for the legal sale of regulated metal; prohibits cash transactions on restricted regulated metal property and for those which require proof of ownership; prohibits checks for metal purchases to be sent to a P.O. Box; and implements a statewide effort to keep metal thieves from “shopping” stolen properties to cities and counties with less onerous penalties.

AIF and the Floridians for Copper & Metal Crime Prevention Coalition believes that these precautionary actions will help deter thieves from bringing stolen items to a legitimate secondary metal dealer and reduce such crimes that effect businesses across the state.

HB 1323 is now ready for action on the House Floor while HB 885 was passed on Friday of this week in the House Economic Affairs Committee. It too is ready for consideration on the Floor.

AIF and the Floridians for Copper & Metal Crime Prevention Coalition SUPPORT legislation that will enact precautionary methods to help deter the removal of metal from private property and government structures, causing economic loss for both the private and public sectors.

On Thursday February 23rd, the full House unanimously approved HB 503 Relating to Environmental Regulation by Representative Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City).

This legislation is critical for Florida's employers because it will help accelerate the approval or denial process and bring certainty to business dealing with state agencies.

This legislation is critical for Florida's employers because it will help accelerate the approval or denial process and bring certainty to business dealing with state agencies. Rep. Patronis explained to members that the proposed legislation is a "common sense approach" to the permitting process.

Time is money and Florida businesses are spending too much time on a permitting process that includes duplications and burdensome regulations. HB 503 is a major step towards reforming the permitting process.

HB 503 will now proceed to the Senate for consideration by its members.

AIF SUPPORTS efforts to streamline permitting across all state agencies. AIF would like to thank Representative Patronis for his commitment to work with all stakeholders on a bill that will streamline the permitting process. Time is money and Florida businesses are spending too much time on a permitting process that includes duplications and burdensome regulations.

Business Regulation

On Wednesday February 22nd, the House Judiciary Committee passed HB 609, "Wage Protection for Employees," sponsored by Representative Tom Goodson (R-Titusville) by a vote of 12-6.

This legislation provides that the regulation of wage theft is expressly preempted to the state. Therefore, local governments may not regulate over and above the existing state and federal laws. The bill also defines "wage theft" as an illegal or improper underpayment or nonpayment of an individual worker's wages, salaries, commissions, or other similar form of compensation.

HB 609 was filed in response to Miami-Dade County's formation of a local process for employees to file claims for unpaid wages outside of the processes available under state and federal law. Currently, there are numerous legal avenues already available for employees to recoup wages. The Miami-Dade ordinance exposes employers to false claims by disgruntled employees. This scenario forces the employer to defend themselves from potentially fraudulent and costly claims.

An amendment was introduced and adopted by Rep. Goodson that addresses concerns brought forth by my members. As amended, HB 609 provides greater protections for employers who face unpaid wage claims. The amended provisions state that employees must notify their employer of their intention to initiate a claim and it provides employers with a specific timeframe to pay the total amount of unpaid wages and prohibits the use of class action law suits.

HB 609 will now proceed to the House floor for a full vote. An identical measure in the Senate – SB 862 by Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs) – is currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will clarify the state's authority to pre-empt local governments from regulating wage theft. A "patchwork" arrangement of local ordinances provides confusion and uncertainty to Florida's employers.

Space

On Thursday February 23rd, the House of Representatives unanimously passed HB 59 Relating to Spaceport Facilities by Representative Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville).

HB 59 designates certain real property within the boundaries of Cecil Airport and the Cecil Commerce Center as spaceport territory. In addition to Cecil Field, the bill also provides that the board of directors for Space Florida may designate real property within the state as spaceport territory. In addition the bill provides a tax exemption for machinery and equipment purchased for a new or expanding business in a spaceport territory. This bill will allow new and expanding businesses located at Cecil Airport and Cecil Commerce Center, or on property licensed as a FAA spaceport, to be eligible for this exemption. In order to qualify, a business must be engaged in spaceport activities.

The Senate companion – SB 110 by Senator Stephen Wise (R-Jacksonville) is now on 2nd reading on the Senate floor.

AIF supports the expansion of spaceport facilities and applauds Rep. Ray's leadership on this bill.

Taxation

On Thursday February 23rd, the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Finance and Tax considered a number of AIF priority bills. The first bill to be considered was SB 1062 Relating to Tangible Personal Property by Senator Nancy Detert (R-Venice). This joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution that would provide the Legislature with the power to eliminate taxes on tangible personal property (TPP) with an assessed value of twenty-five thousand dollars or less. As currently drafted, the amendment would also provide the Legislature with the authority to eventually eliminate the tax entirely.

Representatives from the business community were on hand to support the measure including Associated Industries of Florida. This proposal will not only bring tax relief for over 100,000 small businesses in Florida, but it also allows local governments to increase the exemption via local ordinance in order to try to attract economic development in their county. Representatives of the Cities and Counties expressed gratitude to the sponsor for working with local governments to ensure that they were not cut out of local tax dollars which stem from the TPP.

Upon final passage of the constitutional amendment, which requires three-fifths approval of the Legislature, the measure would then be placed on the 2012 General Election ballot.

SB 1062 passed with unanimous consent and is now ready to be considered by the full Senate Budget Committee.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will aid small and medium-sized businesses by reducing the red tape associated with paper work as well as high property taxes.

The Senate Budget Subcommittee on Finance and Tax then considered SB 982 Relating to Sales Tax Holiday by Senator Ellyn Bogdanoff (R-Ft. Lauderdale). This legislation authorizes a sales tax holiday for specific clothing, footwear, and school supplies. Clothing, wallets, or bags, including handbags, backpacks, fanny packs, and diaper bags with a sales price of \$75 or less per item are included; however, the bill excludes sales tax purchases from the exemption that take place at certain establishments and locations.

The sales tax holiday is a one-time holiday, and is scheduled from August 3, 2012 through August 5, 2012. Private retailers who sell these types of items will likely experience increased sales related to the sales tax holiday. Consumers will also benefit from having the ability to purchase items tax-free during the term of the sales tax holiday.

SB 982 will now be considered by the Senate Budget Committee. The House proposal – HB 737 by Representative Elizabeth Porter (R-Lake City) – was passed in the Senate this week. After the Senate Chamber refused to concur with the provisions in HB 737, the issue will be further discussed in budget conference.

AIF SUPPORTS increasing business activity by allowing Floridians to purchase essential school supplies and other necessities without paying sales tax.

Finally, the Committee unanimously passed SB 1108 Relating to Taxation by Senator Thad Altman (R-Melbourne). The bill creates a new sales tax exemption for manufacturers of gas and airline turbines. The bill was amended to include provisions being sought by Governor Rick Scott. The first would provide an additional reduction in the corporate income tax rate in Florida. The second provision reduces the percentage by which manufacturers must prove that they have expanded their production in order to receive a sales tax exemption on machinery and equipment used in their day to day operations. As amended, manufacturers in Florida must only expand their production by 5% in order to be eligible for a sales tax exemption on these inputs.

SB 1108 has one remaining stop in the Senate Budget Committee.

As the state affiliate for the National Association Manufacturers, Associated Industries of Florida SUPPORTS legislation that makes it easier for manufacturers to compete against their counterparts in neighboring states.

Economic Development

On Tuesday February 21st, the Senate Budget Committee unanimously passed SB 1150 Relating to New Markets Development Program by Senator Garrett Richter (R-Naples).

Florida's New Markets Tax Credits Program was enacted in 2009. The program was established to encourage capital investment in rural and urban low-income communities by allowing taxpayers to earn credits against specified taxes by investing in qualified community development entities that make qualified low-income community investments in qualified active low-income community businesses to create and retain jobs.

SB 1150 increases the total amount of tax credits available to be allocated for the New Markets Development Program from \$97.5 million to \$195 million, as well as increases the amount of permissible tax credits to be distributed in a single fiscal year from \$20 million to \$40 million. The bill also increases the number of years that a qualified community development entity is prohibited from making cash interest payments in excess of their operating income on long term debt securities issued as qualified investments from six years to seven. Lastly, SB 1150 specifies that a qualified community development entity's cumulative operating income should be calculated without giving effect to the interest expense on such long-term debt security.

SB 1150 will now head to the Senate floor. The House version – HB 1119 by Representative Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island) – was passed by the full House on Thursday and will likely be sent to the Senate, substituted for its House companion and prepared for final passage by the Legislature.

The Florida House overwhelmingly passed HB 1119 on Thursday February 23rd by a unanimous vote and will be sending it to the Senate for their consideration. By passing this bill sponsored by Representative Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island) the legislature would increase the amounts available to eligible companies and extend the program through the existence of an additional \$97 million in incentive.

The original program passed in 2009 by incoming House Speaker Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), relies on a market based approach to expand credit, capital and financial services to the state's low income communities across the state. By leveraging a \$26 billion federal program, the New Markets Tax Credit provides a modest state-level tax credit to encourage capital investments to be made in Florida's low income communities by utilizing federal oversight and allowing Florida to implement the program with minimal state resources. The program, with the potential to have a total economic impact of \$6.3 billion over the next ten years, is expected to incite some \$250 million in private sector investment in the short term. This economic development package included over \$97 million in tax credits for eligible businesses who show a long term commitment and investment into Florida's economy.

The House also passed HB 7069 sponsored by Representative Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange) which removes a maximum cap on tax refunds available for the Qualified Targeted Industry and Qualified Defense Contractor and Space Flight Business Programs. This will allow companies that have taken advantage of these programs and that continue to create jobs using these tools, to continue their efforts for job growth and creation.

Both measures passed the full House and will now proceed to the Senate for consideration by its members.

AIF SUPPORTS the authorization of additional resources for eligible businesses that are committed to growing Florida's economy.

On Friday February 24th, the House Economic Affairs Committee met and passed HB 1399 Relating to Transportation presented by Representative Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). HB 1399 looks to create jobs and fund infrastructure projects at Florida's 14 deepwater ports. Although there were numerous amendments adopted today, none affected the language supporting economic development at Florida's ports.

Currently, Florida statutes require that a minimum of \$8 million per year be made available from the State Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) to fund the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development (FSTED) Program. FSTED has been funded at a level of \$15 million since 2004 and in order to match current practice, HB 1399 increases the minimum FSTED funds available from \$8 million to \$15 million per year. HB 1399 also provides that the FSTED program may be used to finance port projects that retain or enhance the creation of jobs in all areas of the state. HB 1399 also removes the limit of a single port's distribution of funds to \$7 million during one calendar year or \$30 million during any five calendar year period.

HB 1399 will create the Strategic Port Investment Initiative within DOT. Beginning in fiscal year 2012-13, a minimum of \$35 million will be available annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund (STIF) for the initiative. DOT is required to work with the deepwater ports to develop and maintain a priority list of strategic projects that meet the state's economic development goal of becoming a hub for trade, logistics, and export oriented activities.

Finally, HB 1399 creates the Intermodal Logistics Center Infrastructure Support Program within DOT, to provide funds to local governments and seaports thereby enabling the state to respond to private sector market demands and meet the state's economic development goal of becoming a hub for trade, logistics, and export-oriented activities. Beginning in fiscal year 2012-2013, up to \$5 million per year shall be made available from the STTF for the program.

HB 1399 is now headed to the House floor. Senator Jack Latvala (R-St. Petersburg) is sponsoring the Senate version of the bill, SB 1866, which will be heard in the Senate Budget Committee next week.

AIF will continue to SUPPORT legislation that focuses on the development and expansion of Florida's 14 deepwater ports.

Legal & Judicial

On Friday February 24th, the full House passed HB 243 Relating to Expert Testimony by Representative Larry Metz (R-Eustis) by a vote of 77-34.

Representative Metz explained that the standards in this legislation would require litigants to use accepted and proven scientific standards to qualify expert witnesses and eliminates the current possibility that mere opinion and junk science can be relied upon as evidence. The standard in Representative Metz's bill is the standard used in federal courts and in over 30 other states which is vital to providing uniformity in Florida's judicial system.

HB 243 will now proceed to the Senate for a vote by its members. An identical measure in the Senate – SB 378 by Senator Garrett Richter (R-Naples) – is scheduled for hearing on Tuesday, February 28th in the Senate Budget Committee.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will utilize highly regarded legal standards to ensure a level playing field during litigation.

Health Care

On Thursday February 23rd, the House Health & Human Services Committee overwhelmingly passed HB 711 by Representative Ed Hooper (R-Clearwater). The measure was approved on a 17 to 1 vote.

HB 711 was substantially amended on Thursday to align the bill more closely with its Senate companion - SB 1568 by Senator Don Gaetz (R-Destin). This legislation introduces more public oversight when a public hospital is being considered for a purchase or lease. The bill would provide that the circuit court must review the transaction to decide if the sale or lease process has complied with various requirements and that the sale or lease amount agreed to is fair market value, and is of the best interest to the community.

One of the changes provided by the amendment to HB 711 would increase the requirements that must be followed when a public hospital is being sold or leased. HB 711 still calls for a circuit judge to approve that deal. The Senate measure bill gives this authority to the Chief Financial Officer.

HB 711 will now advance to the full House for consideration. SB 1568 by Sen. Gaetz is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Budget Subcommittee on General Government Appropriations on Tuesday, February 28.

AIF SUPPORTS legislation that will ensure that the taxpayer and the community are protected by ensuring that full and fair market value is received in exchange for the sale and/or lease of public hospitals.