



DAILY BRIEF

From March 12, 2014

Education & Workforce

HB 541 – relating to Public-Private Partnerships

On Wednesday, March 12th, HB 541, relating to Public-Private Partnerships by Representative Greg Steube (R-Sarasota) unanimously passed the House Government Operations Subcommittee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House Appropriations Committee.

The bill is designed to help both the State University System (SUS) and the construction industry in Florida. HB 541 will allow for the private sector to offer unsolicited bids on university projects, comprehensive agreements for construction projects, and grants the Board of Governors approval authority on public-private partnership projects within the SUS.

AIF strongly supports utilization of the private sector in helping to solve public construction needs. Government's role is critical in securing and advancing our state's infrastructure.

SB 1642 – relating to Education Accountability

On Wednesday, March 12th, SB 1642, relating to Education Accountability, by the Senate Committee on Education passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education by an 11-1 vote. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, its last stop before the Senate floor.

The bill creates a clarified A through F and 100-point school grading system where point values, not safety nets or triggers, are the indicator of the grade earned. Under the bill, district and school grades, which would be released every year in the summer at the same time, will be simplified and transparent. No changes would be made to the current school grading system in 2013-14; however, the new 2014-15 school grades will function as an informational baseline for schools to work toward improved future performance.

AIF supports a comprehensive effort to expand economic opportunity through education. Increased transparency in school grading is a large component to making education a better value for Florida's families and taxpayers alike.

SB 790 – relating to Education

On Wednesday, March 12th, SB 790, relating to Education, by Senator John Legg (R-Lutz) passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education by an 11-1 vote. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, its last stop before the Senate floor.

This bill creates the Florida digital classrooms plan and allocation to establish a targeted and purposeful approach to technology enhancements in Florida's classrooms to improve student performance outcomes. The bill ties technology-enhanced classroom teaching and learning to measurable student performance outcomes and requires an independent evaluation of the school districts' outcomes and technology inventory and infrastructure needs, which the districts must report to the department. Consequently, the school districts must document how technology enhancements effect performance of

students. In addition, the bill authorizes public schools to promote digital literacy and competency in Florida's schools, which will help equip Florida's students with skills to succeed in a competitive economy.

AIF supports removing all barriers for accessing all forms of innovative technology-driven education. Improving our workforce through education reforms will be a key ingredient to job creation and also ensuring businesses continue to establish in Florida.

HB 957 – relating to Local Regulation of Wage Theft

On Wednesday, March 12th HB 957, relating to Local Regulation of Wage Theft, by Representative Neil Combee (R-Auburndale) passed the House Civil Justice Subcommittee by a 7-4 vote. **AIF General Counsel, Tammy Perdue**, stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House Local & Federal Affairs Committee.



This bill preempts any wage theft ordinance that was not enacted before January 1, 2014 and provides guidelines that a county must follow in order to establish a local wage theft ordinance. Employers need this framework throughout the state so that one policy covers each location in Florida in which a business operates.

AIF supports this bill because wage protection laws should be consistent throughout the state in order to achieve fairness for both employees and employers.

Insurance

HB 187 – relating to Civil Remedies Against Insurers

On Wednesday, March 12th, HB 187, relating to Civil Remedies Against Insurers, by Representative Kathleen C. Passidomo (R-Naples) passed the House Civil Justice Subcommittee by an 8-4 vote. **AIF General Counsel, Tammy Perdue**, stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee.

Below is a press release AIF released today regarding this bill:

Tallahassee, Fla. – *The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) today commended the House Civil Justice Subcommittee for advancing legal reform legislation – House Bill 187, by Representative Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples), relating to civil remedies against insurers.*

“AIF supports this good piece of legislation by Representative Passidomo aimed at making our state’s legal climate a friendlier place to do business,” said AIF President & CEO Tom Feeney. “We believe any legal reform that decreases the cost of litigation and removes unfair and unpredictable barriers to growth are necessary to cultivate a healthy and prosperous arena for commerce to thrive.”

HB 187 establishes a 60-day timeframe during which an insurer may investigate and, if warranted, tender policy limits to settle a liability. Feeney commented, “An unbalanced civil justice system in Florida dampens the ability of employers to recover from the economic downturn and create new jobs. AIF supports HB 187 that will give businesses and insurers reasonable time to settle a liability claim without litigation.”

“We applaud the House Civil Justice Subcommittee for passing this important legal reform bill and look forward to the continued discussion on how Florida can have a clear and level playing field in the courtroom.”

HB 187 is now slated to advance to the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee.

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Legal & Judicial

HB 413 – relating to Consumer Collection Practices

On Wednesday, March 12th, HB 413, relating to Consumer Collection Practices, by Representative David Santiago (R-Deltona)unanimously passed the House Regulatory Affairs Committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill subjects “control persons” of consumer collection agencies (CCAs) to state and federal criminal background checks, and subjects these persons to disqualifying periods based on the severity and recency of a criminal conviction. The bill enhances the authority of the Office of Financial Regulation (OFR) to register, investigate, examine, and bring enforcement actions against consumer collection agencies. The bill requires CCA registrants to report criminal convictions, changes from the initial application, and changes to the controlling persons of a CCA agency.

AIF supports this bill because they give businesses more confidence in turning over their debt to a Florida Debt Collector who must follow the new requirements of this bill.

IT Governance

HB 7073 – relating to Information Technology Governance

On Wednesday, March 12th, HB 7073, relating to Information Technology Governance, by House Appropriations Committee passed unanimously on the House floor. The bill will become law if the Senate passes an identical bill and the Governor signs the legislation.

The bill substantially revises how the state establishes information technology (IT) policy and procedures. The bill creates the Agency for State Technology (AST), administratively housed in the Department of Management Services. The defunct Agency for Enterprise Information Technology is abolished by the bill, and its duties are transferred to the AST. The AST is given extensive authority to set state technology policy and perform project oversight of large IT projects.

AIF supports a strong Chief Information Officer in the Executive branch to provide the leadership needed to allow the state to provide quality services to the citizens in the most cost efficient way possible. Information technology will offer the tools to re-engineer the state’s business processes to accomplish this goal. In order to gain the benefits of IT, there must be significant changes in IT Governance in Florida and this bill does just that. Today Florida is ranked at the bottom of all states in Information Technology.