



# WEEKLY BRIEF

From the Week of April 7 – 11, 2014

## Education & Workforce

### SB 900 – relating to Public-private Partnerships

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 900, relating to Public-private Partnerships, by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater) unanimously passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. **AIF Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.



The bill is designed to help both the State University System (SUS) and the construction industry in Florida. SB 900 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 1400 – relating to Postsecondary Student Tuition

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 1400, relating to Postsecondary Student Tuition, by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater) passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education by an 8-5 vote. **AIF Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, spoke in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF released the following press release Wednesday regarding SB 1400.

***Tallahassee, Fla.** – The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) today released the following statement attributed to its Senior Vice President of State & Federal Affairs Brewster Bevis regarding the advancement of postsecondary student tuition legislation, Senate Bill 1400 by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater). SB 1400 passed the Florida Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education earlier today.*

*“AIF commends the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education for advancing Senator Latvala’s postsecondary student tuition legislation. Senate Bill 1400, which will allow certain undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition, is a positive step forward for businesses in, and looking to relocate to, Florida.*

*“Education reform, such as this, will give business owners the opportunity to retain and grow a strong workforce. And, we look forward to its advancement to the Senate floor, with its next stop being Senate Appropriations.”*

*For more information on AIF, please visit [AIF.com](http://AIF.com) and follow @VoiceofFLBiz.*

The bill provides that students, regardless of immigration status, who attend a Florida high school for 3 consecutive years and enroll in an institution of higher education within 24 months after graduation are not required to pay out-of-state fees, provided they submit their high school transcript as documentary evidence of attendance and graduation. While these students are not classified as residents for tuition purposes, they may be reported for purposes of state funding.

AIF supports legislation that would allow all Florida high school graduates to qualify for in-state tuition at our public colleges, universities and independent universities regardless of their immigration status, subject to meeting all admission standards.

#### **SB 212 – relating to High School Graduation Requirements**

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 212, relating to High School Graduation Requirements, by Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange) passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education by a 12-1 vote. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The bill removes the requirement for financial literacy to be included in the instruction of Economics. Beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2014-2015 school year, the high school graduation requirements must include a one-half credit in personal financial literacy and money management instruction. Additionally, the bill reduces the number of required elective credits from eight to seven and one-half credits.

AIF supports the bill because it is important that our future workforce is not only equipped with technical skills, but also basic financial literacy skills such as balancing a checkbook, understanding budgets and general money management.

#### **SB 1528 – relating to Charter Schools**

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 1528, relating to School Choice by Senator Rob Bradley (R-Orange Park) unanimously passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

This bill creates new opportunities for high-performing charter school operators to establish quality charter schools in Florida, including charter schools in hard-to serve areas. The bill authorizes an out-of-state entity that successfully operates a system of charter schools to apply and qualify for high-performing charter school system status. The state board must adopt rules specifying a process and criteria for evaluating out-of-state entities for “high-performing” status. Eligibility criteria must be aligned with the priorities specified in the federal Charter Schools Program Grants for Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools, which emphasizes student achievement. Additionally, the bill shifts the focus of the state’s program for replicating quality charter schools towards meeting school district needs for innovative school choice options and serving areas served by struggling traditional public schools.

AIF supports educational choice. In addition, AIF supports capital outlay funding for public charter schools, removing artificial enrollment caps that prevent public charter schools from meeting the demand of students on waiting lists, restricting authority of school districts from imposing additional regulatory burdens on public charter schools and changes to funding formulas to require that funding follows the individual student.

#### **SB 1642 – relating to Education Accountability**

On Friday, April 11th, SB 1642, relating to Education Accountability, by the Senate Committee on Education unanimously passed the Senate. The bill now heads to the House for consideration.

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.

#### **HB 377/SB 628 – relating to Educational Facilities Financing**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 377, relating to Educational Facilities Financing, by Representative George Moraitis, Jr. (R-Ft. Lauderdale) unanimously passed the House. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 628, the companion bill to HB 377, by Senator Bill Montford (D-Apalachicola) unanimously passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The bill expands the Higher Educational Facilities Financing Law (HEFFA) in two significant ways by adding non-profit, SACS accredited, K-12 schools to those institutions eligible to participate and expanding the definition of a project that can be financed with tax exempt bonds, which would include related projects such as wetland mitigation when financing a building project. HEFFA was created in Florida Statute in 2001 to give independent, non-profit, four year, SACS accredited institutions (all 31 Independent Institutions) access to the tax exempt bond market to borrow funds for capital outlay and cash flow purposes. These funds are not backed by the full faith and credit of the state, but rather by private capital and institution credit. The bill also expands the types of projects that can be financed with tax exempt bonds and clarifies that charter schools would not be eligible for this mechanism.

AIF supports this bill and has made this expansion a priority for the 2014 legislative session. This bill will allow ICUF institutions and non-profit SACS accredited K-12 institutions to expand their capacity and access for Florida's K-20 students and at no cost to the Florida taxpayers.

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## **Transportation**

#### **SB 1618 – relating to Chauffeured Limousines**

On Thursday, April 10th, SB 1618, relating to Chauffeured Limousines, by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) passed the Senate Committee on Transportation by 7-3 vote. **AIF Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, spoke in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Community Affairs.



AIF released the following press release Thursday regarding SB 1618.

*Tallahassee, Fla. – The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) today released the following statement attributed to its Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs Brewster Bevis in regards to the advancement of Senate Bill 1618 by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). SB 1618, relating to chauffeured limousines, passed the Florida Senate Committee on Transportation earlier today.*

*“AIF is pleased that the Senate Committee on Transportation advanced SB 1618 by Senator Brandes this morning.*

*“This chauffeured limousines legislation opens the Florida transportation market, creating jobs and price competition, as well as promoting consumer choice.*

*“We look forward to seeing this legislation continue to advance through the Florida Senate.”*

*SB 1618 has also been referred to the Senate Committee on Community Affairs.*

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The bill creates a new category of public transit within Hillsborough County that provides service between specific origins and destinations selected by the individual user with such service being provided at a time that is agreed upon by the user and provider of the service. The bill will provide a uniform statewide level of regulation of emerging transportation technology, specifically chauffeured limousines, to provide stability and predictability to businesses seeking to implement such technology, to provide convenience and safety to the traveling public, and to enhance personal mobility.

*AIF supports statewide digital transportation service policies that will work to create price competition, promote consumer choice and create jobs.*

#### **HB 947 – relating to Fuel Terminals**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 947, relating to Fuel Terminals, by Representative Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville) unanimously passed the House Economic Affairs Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill would declare fuel terminals located in or next to Florida’s ports as critical state infrastructure. The bill would also limit local governments’ regulation of the existing terminals and prohibit them from declaring the terminals illegal or non-conforming. It goes further to allow for expansion of existing fuel terminals within the terminals property boundaries, although nothing in the bill will prevent local government from enforcing state and federal safety standards.

*AIF supports terminals being designed as critical infrastructure preempting local governments from changing the land use designation. Terminals are essential components to petroleum logistics, and Florida's energy portfolio, enabling the bulk transfer of the 27 million gallons of gasoline and diesel into Florida each day for further distribution.*

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## **Economic Development**

#### **SB 1216 – relating to Professional Sports Facilities**

On Thursday, April 10th, SB 1216, relating to Professional Sports Facilities, by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater) passed the Senate Committee on Appropriations by a 17-2 vote. **AIF Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate floor.



The bill creates the Sports Development Program, which allows for distributions of state sales and use tax revenue to fund professional sports franchise facilities, including spring training facilities, up to an annual cap of \$13 million for all certified applicants. Applicants would be evaluated and recommended by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) and distributions must be approved by the

Legislature. Distributed funds would go towards the construction or improvement of a professional sports facility with the maximum annual distribution for a single facility at \$3 million. Distributions can be made for up to 30 years for a potential maximum amount of \$90 million per certified applicant.

AIF supports this bill because of the positive impact that professional sports have on Florida's economy and the thousands of jobs they provide to Floridians.

### **HB 325 – relating to Brownfields**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 325, relating to Brownfields, by Representative Charlie Stone (R-Ocala) unanimously passed the House Economic Affairs Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill clarifies, in statute, the process for designation of a Brownfields area and offers liability protection for anyone responsible for rehabilitation of a Brownfields site. Subsequently, the bill encourages redevelopment in our state's Brownfields areas.

AIF supports any legislation promoting Florida's Brownfield Program as it provides a variety of financial and regulatory incentives encouraging parties to voluntarily clean up and redevelop Brownfield sites. By restoring Brownfield sites, the properties return to the tax rolls quicker and become useful to their community.

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## **Insurance**

### **SB 1580 – relating to Workers' Compensation Cost Task Force**

On Tuesday, April 8th, SB 1580, relating to Workers' Compensation Cost Task Force, by Senator Alan Hays (R-Umatilla) unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Health Policy. **Tammy Perdue, AIF's General Counsel**, stood in opposition of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.



During the committee, **Tammy Perdue** weighed in on the status of Florida's workers' compensation system during debate over a potential task force developing through SB 1580. AIF and our Workers' Compensation Coalition strongly caution the legislature to make any changes to Florida workers' comp at this time. The driving forces behind this caution are the three cases currently pending before the Florida Supreme Court that challenge the constitutionality of the workers compensation law. Given the Court's recent opinions on other topics, including its recent disregard for the Legislature's fact finding ability and conclusions in the *McCall* case, we are very concerned that the outcome of any one of those cases could disrupt the critical balance of the system on which Florida employers rely.

Because of the looming potential for such sweeping change that lies with the Court, our Coalition unanimously agreed that we would not support changes to Florida's workers' compensation law during this session. We have worked closely with Senator Hays and other members of the committee on sustaining a good workers' compensation system for the state for many years and we are confident they will continue to work with us throughout this session to ensure the system continues to be strong. The bill passed Tuesday's committee unanimously with amendments to alter the composition of the task force and to broaden its scope to include costs and ratemaking in other states.

### **SB 1672 – relating to Property Insurance**

On Monday, April 7th, SB 1672, relating to Property Insurance, by the Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Commerce and Tourism. AIF stood in support

of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Rules.

The bill addresses several aspects of Citizens eligibility for commercial residential multi-peril policies, allows surplus lines insurers to make offers of coverage in the Citizens Clearinghouse, and increases the mandatory residential property insurance deductible offering for non-hurricane losses to \$1,000 from \$500. During Monday's committee, amendments were adopted to restrict the ability of public adjusters to choose the contractors who will repair a property and prohibit mitigation inspectors from paying agents to get referrals.

AIF supports common sense reforms to depopulate Citizens in a continuing effort to reduce assessments on all insurance policyholders. AIF also supports reducing fraud in the property insurance marketplace, which helps control insurance costs for businesses and homeowners alike.

#### **HB 1271/SB 1308 – relating to Insurer Solvency**

On Thursday, April 10th, HB 1271, relating to Insurer Insolvency, by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola) unanimously passed the House Regulatory Affairs Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 1308, the companion bill to HB 1271, by Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs) unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Rules. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate floor.

These bills adopt several updates from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC). Specially, the bill adds additional protections for holding company systems, updates requirements for life insurance reserves, and improves actuarial information provided to OIR from insurers.

AIF supports legislation that modernizes insurance regulation and takes steps to achieve uniformity with other states, creating consistent regulations and a more efficient allocation of capital, which improves Florida's insurance marketplace for business and personal lines policyholders.

#### **HB 391 – relating to Florida Catastrophic Storm Risk Management Center**

On Thursday, April 10th, HB 391, relating to Florida Catastrophic Storm Risk Management Center, by Representative Bill Hager (R-Boca Raton) unanimously passed the House Regulatory Affairs Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill provides that the State Board of Administration shall annually transfer a portion of the investment income from the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund to the Florida Catastrophic Storm Risk Management Center located at The Florida State University. The amount of funding to be transferred shall be the lesser amount of \$1 million, or 35 percent of the fund's investment income minus \$10 million, as determined by using the most recent fiscal year-end audited financial statements of the Fund. The bill specifies that any funds transferred must solely be used for and consistent with the center's statutory purpose of supporting the state's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from catastrophic storms.

AIF supports a more effective Storm Risk Management Program to ensure that the state is adequately prepared for a natural disaster.

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## Health Care

### **SB 1354 – relating to Health Care**

On Tuesday, April 8th, SB 1354, by Senator Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring) unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance. AIF stood in opposition of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the Senate floor.

AIF released the following press release Tuesday regarding SB 1354.

***Tallahassee, Fla.** – The Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) today released the following statement attributed to its General Counsel Tammy Perdue in opposition to the advancement of Senate Bill 1354, by Senator Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring), which passed the Florida Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance.*

*“AIF opposes Senate Bill 1354, which would increase health care costs for Florida businesses through additional, onerous regulation.*

*“SB 1354 makes health care more expensive and actually impedes our mission to provide greater access to quality health care at more affordable costs for employers.*

*“As this bill now heads to the Senate floor, we encourage members to have a deliberative and thoughtful discussion on this legislative proposal that would create more red tape and higher costs for Florida businesses.”*

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During the committee, the bill was amended with a strike all amendment that, among other provisions, expanded the scope of the bill. The bill originally affected individuals, small employers and large employers who are not self-insured. As expanded, the bill would apply to out of state group insurance policies, the state employees’ health insurance program and the Medicaid program.

AIF stood in opposition to the bill raising the concern that provisions in the bill will likely increase health insurance premiums in the private market. Further, the provisions would increase the cost of the state’s Medicaid Program which, in turn, will be subsidized by Florida’s employers.

The most troubling provision would significantly restrict the use of a step-therapy protocol, an important utilization management tool used by insurers and would require an override of the protocol to be granted.

**AIF opposes legislation that would make quality health care more expensive for Florida’s residents and employers.**

### **SB 1646 – relating to Telemedicine**

On Wednesday, April 9th, SB 1646, relating to Telemedicine Services, by the Senate Committee on Health Policy unanimously passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

There were amendments adopted for the bill on Wednesday which further limit the practitioners who could use this technology in Florida. While AIF supports the expanded use of technology in health care delivery, there are ongoing concerns with this version of the bill as it could increase regulatory barriers and costs of health care delivery.

The bill seeks to increase the use of telemedicine for providing health care services to Floridians. Under the bill, PAs, ARNPs, and pharmacists will be added to the list of health care providers that would be allowed to provide services to Floridians through the use of telemedicine. The bill would also allow out of state physicians to provide telemedicine services from another state to if they maintain professional liability coverage for telemedicine services and if they:

- Have privileges at an out-of-state hospital affiliated with a Florida licensed hospital;
- Are affiliated with an out-of-state health insurer authorized to conduct business in Florida; or
- Practice in a state that authorizes Florida-licensed physicians to provide telemedicine services to patients located in that state without having to be licensed to practice medicine in that state.

Further, the out of state physician would be subject to disciplinary action by the professional medical board or regulatory entity that has jurisdiction over the hospital or insurer affiliated with the physician.

AIF supports legislation that permits an unfettered role for telemedicine services that will allow our citizens access to better quality care at lower costs.

### **HB 7113 – relating to Health Care**

On Thursday, April 10th, HB 7113, relating to Health Care, by the House Health Innovation Subcommittee, Representative Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) and Representative Greg Steube (R-Sarasota) passed the House Appropriations Committee by a 15-2 vote. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

Originally, HB 7113 addressed the regulation of Florida's trauma centers; however, Thursday's proposed committee substitute expanded the scope of the bill significantly. AIF expressed support, particularly, for the following two sections of the bill:

*Telehealth* –the bill would:

- Authorize all Florida licensed health care professionals to utilize telemedicine, from any location, to deliver health care services within their respective scopes of practice.
- Allow out-of-state health care professionals to utilize telemedicine to provide health care services to Floridians and require the professionals to register with the Department of Health or the applicable board.
- Require the Department of Health to publish on its website a list of all registered out-of-state health care professionals, including specific background information for each telemedicine provider.
- Permit the use of telemedicine in the diagnosis and treatment of the human eye if certain criteria are met.

*Scope of Practice Expansion* – the bill would:

- Allow certified nurse practitioners (CNPs) who meet certain criteria to register with the Board of Nursing to practice advanced nursing without physician supervision or a protocol as "independent nurse practitioners" (INPs).
- Authorize an INP to: (1) administer, dispense, order, and prescribe controlled medicinal drugs, including controlled substances; (2) provide a signature, certification, stamp, verification, affidavit, or other endorsement that is otherwise required to be signed by a physician; (3) act as a patient's primary care provider; (4) certify a cause of death and sign death certificates; (5)



certify a person to be involuntarily examined under the Baker Act; and (6) examine a person admitted into a receiving facility under the Baker Act and approve his or her release, if the INP is nationally certified as a psychiatric-mental health advanced practice nurse.

- Set standards for controlled substance prescribing by INPs.

AIF supports legislation that permits an unfettered role for telemedicine services that will allow our citizens access to better quality care at lower costs.

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## Environment

### **SB 1182 – relating to Secondary Metals Recyclers**

On Monday, April 7th, SB 1182, relating to Secondary Metals Recyclers, by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Agriculture. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The bill makes major changes to governing secondary metals recyclers which subsequently strengthens the law on the books. The key part of the bill shifts authority of the secondary metal recyclers program from the Department of Revenue to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which has law enforcement capabilities.

AIF supports a well regulated secondary metal recyclers program that will reduce the likelihood of metal theft in the state.

### **SB 1206 – relating to Agricultural Industry Certifications**

On Tuesday, April 8th, SB 1206, relating to Agricultural Industry Certifications, by Senator Bill Montford (D-Apalachicola) unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Agriculture. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to its last stop before the Senate floor in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

The bill would develop a pathway for students to show their expertise in the agricultural industry. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), in cooperation with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Science at the University of Florida and the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, to annually provide to the state board and the Department of Education information and industry certifications for farm occupations to be considered for placement on the Industry Certification Funding List and the Postsecondary Industry Certification Funding List.

AIF supports adding agriculture to industry certifications because it recognizes the critical need for agricultural careers in the state of Florida.

### **HB 1427 – relating to Citrus Greening Disease**

On Tuesday, April 8th, HB 1427, relating to Citrus Greening Disease, by Representative Ben Albritton (R-Bartow) unanimously passed the House Local & Federal Affairs Committee.

On Friday, April 11th, HB 1427 unanimously passed the House State Affairs Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during both committees. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill urges the U.S. Congress to support the Florida citrus industry in its efforts to combat and defeat Huanglongbing, commonly known as citrus greening disease, through policy initiatives, regulatory support, and adequate funding. The disease has no known cure. Over a five year period from 2005-2011, it is estimated that HLB caused an economic loss of \$4.54 billion and caused the loss of 8,257 jobs in Florida.

AIF supports state and federal funding for research into the causes and cure of citrus greening disease.

#### **HB 487 – relating to Agricultural Industry Certifications**

On Thursday, April 10th, HB 487, relating to Agricultural Industry Certifications, by Representative Jake Raburn (R-Valrico) unanimously passed the House Appropriations Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill would develop a pathway for students to show their expertise in the agricultural industry. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), in cooperation with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Science at the University of Florida and the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, to annually provide to the state board and the Department of Education information and industry certifications for farm occupations to be considered for placement on the Industry Certification Funding List and the Postsecondary Industry Certification Funding List.

AIF supports adding agriculture to industry certifications because it recognizes the critical need for agricultural careers in the state of Florida.

#### **HB 536 – relating to Reclaimed Water**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 536, relating to Reclaimed Water, by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-New Port Richey) unanimously passed the Senate. The bill now heads to the House for consideration.

The bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, in cooperation with the five Water Management Districts, to conduct a study and submit a report on the expansion of the beneficial use of reclaimed water, including stormwater and excess surface water

AIF supports state funding for alternative water supply projects. Water retention and storage are vital to expanding Florida's water supply, which will give the state a head start on economic development and jobs in the future.

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### **Taxation & Budget**

#### **HB 803 – relating to Communications Services Tax**

On Thursday, April 10th, SB 803, relating to Communication Services Tax, by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton) unanimously passed the House Appropriations Committee. AIF stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill seeks to clarify that the state's Communications Service Tax (CST) is not applicable to communications between hotels and their franchises. Recently, the state's Department of Revenue (DoR) began auditing various hotels, large and small, and assessing the CST despite having no statutory direction to do so. HB 803 is a consensus product between the state's DoR and the hotel lodging industry that seeks to clarify that these charges are not applicable. The bill was scored to be revenue neutral for the state.

AIF supports reducing communication services taxes on Florida's businesses. Subsequently, businesses could utilize this tax savings to reinvest in their business.

### **HB 1237 – relating to Special Districts**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 1237, relating to Special Districts, by Representative Larry Metz (R-Groveland) unanimously passed the House Economic Affairs Committee. A strike all amendment was introduced during the committee that included a few items of concern for AIF. AIF has committed to working with the sponsor to work out these issues. AIF spoke in favor of the bill during the committee, noting our reservations regarding the strike all. The bill now heads to the House floor.

The bill seeks to reorganize chapter 189, F.S., relating to special districts, into eight parts; revises duties of Legislative Auditing Committee; specifies applicability of procedures regarding suspension & removal of member of governing body of special district; revises when special district may be declared inactive; prohibits special districts declared inactive from collecting taxes, fees, or assessments; and provides for costs of litigation & reasonable attorney fees under certain conditions. The bill also require each special district to update and maintain an internet website on which the district must publish extensive information. In addition, the legislation clarifies a special district declared inactive on the unanimous vote of its governing body may be dissolved without a referendum and repeals a part of the Community Improvement Authority Act due to its irrelevance throughout the Act's duration in statute.

AIF supports common-sense and transparent policy in regards to the creation and enforcement of special districts. In addition, AIF supports legislation that reduces uncertainty and red tape for Florida's business community.

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## **Legal & Judicial**

### **HB 1135 – relating to Limitation of Civil Liability for Farmers**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 1135, relating to Civil Liability of Farmers, by Representative Kevin Rader (D-Boca Raton)unanimously passed the House Judiciary Committee. **AIF Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, stood in support of the bill during the committee. The bill now heads to the House floor.



These bills exempt a farmer from civil liability if he gratuitously allows a person to come onto his/her land to remove farm produce or crops at any time. Presently the exemption applies only when that activity takes place after harvesting.

AIF supports legislation that will reduce the number of frivolous lawsuits brought against Florida's business owners.

### **HB 413 – relating to Consumer Collection Practices**

On Friday, April 11th, HB 413, relating to Consumer Collection Practices, by Representative David Santiago (R-Deltona) unanimously passed the House. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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.

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## **IT Governance**

### **SB 1010 – relating to Cable and Video Services**

On Friday, April 11th, SB 1010, relating to Cable and Video Services, by Senator Garrett Richter (R-Naples) unanimously passed the Senate. The bill now heads to the House for consideration.

The bill repeals a study by the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability on the status of video competition in Florida. This is a study that duplicates an annual national study done by the Federal Communications Commission and is an unnecessary expense for government and for companies to compile and submit proprietary information.

AIF supports eliminating duplicative laws that put an unnecessary compliance burden on Florida's businesses and government.