

# WEEKLY UPDATE



**From April 25th, 2014**

This week is the start of the 2015 Florida State Legislative Session, welcome back everyone! Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) is pleased to present its first installment of our daily report containing bills and proposed legislation most important to Florida employers. This first report includes bills heard in committees from March 3rd through March 5th.

## **ENVIRONMENT & AGRICULTURAL**

### **HB 7003- Relating to Water Resources**

On Thursday, March 5th, **HB 7003**, by **Rep. Matt Caldwell (R- Leigh Acres)** passed through the House with 106 yeas and 9 nays. The Department of Environmental Protection projects a water shortage of 1.3 billion gallons of water per day by 2030. This bill comprehensively addresses this shortage and other water issues in our state. Some key components of the bill include the Springs Protection Program, the Central Florida Water Initiative, the Central and Southern Florida Project, and the Northern Everglades project. One major goal of this bill is to create an interagency agreement to develop and implement a uniform water management system; regarding water supply planning, consumptive water use permitting, and resource protection programs. HB 7003 now heads to the Senate for consideration.

**AIF supports the Florida House of Representatives effort to address Florida’s major water challenges by developing legislation that address a series of critical issues.**

AIF released the following press release regarding the passage of HB 7003.

#### **Statement from AIF’s H2O Coalition**

##### **Regarding the Florida House’s Bipartisan Passage of Comprehensive Water Policy**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – Associated Industries of Florida’s Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs Brewster Bevis released the following statement regarding the Florida House’s bipartisan passage of HB 7003:

“Today, the Florida House took a giant step forward in adopting a policy that will better prepare Florida for current and future water challenges. HB 7003 creates sustainable solutions for growing our water supply, provides protections for our springs, and gives water managers additional options so that the regional needs of our state can be better met.

The Coalition appreciates the hard work of Representative Matt Caldwell and especially House Speaker Steve Crisafulli. Under this Speaker’s leadership, we are closer than ever before to making the adoption of a comprehensive water policy a reality.

As this bill heads to the Senate, the H2O Coalition will continue to advocate for a broad solution that increases our state’s commitment to solving water quality and quantity issues.”

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### **HB 569- Relating to Agritourism**

On Tuesday, March 3rd, **HB 569**, relating to Agritourism, by **Rep. Neil Combee (R- Auburndale)** unanimously passed the **House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee** with 13 yeas and 0 nays. House Bill 569 addresses local government regulation of “agritourism” activities. The bill would remove the ability of local governments to regulate these activities. Several farmers testified on their personal experiences. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

On Wednesday, March 4th, the senate comparison bill **SB 594**, by **Senator Kelli Stargel (R-Lakeland)** also unanimously passed through the Community Affairs committee with 7 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**



**AIF supports any legislation that allows Florida farmers to safely expand their businesses through the use of Agritourism.**

#### **SB 158- Relating to Civil Liability of Farmers**

On Tuesday, March 3rd, **SB 158**, relating to the Civil Liability of Farmers, by **Senator Greg Evers (R-Pensacola)** unanimously passed its first reading with 10 yeas and 0 nays. Senate Bill 158 addresses an exemption from civil liability to anyone who enters a farm for the purpose of removing a product. This bill now moves on to its second reading. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

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

### **EDUCATION & WORKFORCE**

#### **HB 461- Relating to Independent Nonprofit Higher Educational Facilities Financing**

On Tuesday, March 3rd, **HB 461**, relating to the Independent Nonprofit Higher Educational Facilities Financing, by **Rep. Jennifer Sullivan (R- Eustis)**, unanimously passed the **House Higher Education & Workforce Subcommittee** with 7 yeas and 0 nays. The purpose of House Bill 461 is to expand the types of projects that may need to be funded for universities throughout Florida, such as; costs for construction of dining halls, student unions, laboratories, research facilities, classrooms, athletic facilities, health care facilities, maintenance, storage, or utility facilities, and related facilities or structures required or useful for the instruction of students, research, or the operation of an educational institution and certain purchases of equipment and machinery. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF supports legislature to ensure that Higher Education Facilities receive the funding they need for their facility costs.**

### **PROPERTY RIGHTS**

#### **HB 391- Relating to Location of Utilities**

On Tuesday, March 3rd, **HB 391**, by **Rep. Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola)** passed in the **House Local Government Affairs Subcommittee** with 11 yeas and 1 nay.

Recently, a court applied right-of-way (RoW) obligations to utility easements that blurred the distinction between which party is financially responsible for the transfer or movement of utility infrastructure. House Bill 391 will clarify the difference between a RoW and an easement and also define which party is financially responsible for the transfer/move in both.

This bill has two committee stops remaining. **AIF's Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF supports protecting the private property rights of Florida businesses.**

### **PERMITTING**

#### **HB 413- Relating to Low-Voltage Alarm Systems**

On Tuesday, March 3rd, **HB 413**, by **Rep. Bob Cortes (R-Maitland)** passed unanimously through its second stop at the **House Local Government Affairs Subcommittee** with 10 yeas and 0 nays.

The bill amends the current law related to permits required for low-voltage alarm system installation. The bill clarifies that the current law applies to "all" low-voltage alarm system projects for which a permit is required by local government or "local enforcement agencies," including both residential and commercial low-voltage alarm systems. The bill clarifies that a permit is not required to install or service a "wireless alarm system," and defines "wireless alarm system" as a burglar alarm system or smoke detector that is not hardwired. The bill lowers the maximum permitting fee from \$55 to \$40 per permit label. This bill now heads to its final step in the **House Regulatory Affairs Committee**. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs stood in support of this bill.**

On Wednesday, March 4th, the senate companion bill **SB 466**, by **Senator Anitere Flores (R-Miami)** passed through the **Senate Regulated Industries Committee** committee with 11 yeas and 1 nay. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF supports legislature that will reduce unnecessary permitting on Florida businesses.**

## HEALTH CARE

### **SB 784- Relating to Health Care**

On Wednesday, March 4th, **SB 784**, by **Senator Don Gaetz (R-Panama City)** passed through the **Senate Banking and Insurance Committee** unanimously with 11 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's General Counsel, Tammy Perdue, stood and spoke in opposition of this bill.**



Senate Bill 784 would attack the cost savings measures used by health plans with prescription drugs. The bill would establish a Clinical Practices Review Commission within the Department of Health to review prior authorization, step therapy, or other protocols submitted by health plans. The commission would determine if the limitation is supported by sufficient clinical evidence. The fear is that it will raise health care costs for employers who provide their employees with health care.

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

On Wednesday, March 4th, the **Senate Health Policy Committee** held a panel discussion on the following options for expanding health care coverage in Florida:

**Healthy Works Florida** - This plan is a collective effort between Florida's business community, AIF, the Florida Hospital Association, local Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders, to extend coverage to additional Floridians with available federal funds.

In 2012, employers paid almost \$3 billion to help cover the cost of those who could not afford to get health coverage, which cannot be sustained. The proposed plan is not an expansion of the state's Medicaid program, but is a private coverage option for persons making up to 138% of the federal poverty level. The premiums for the program would be based on a sliding scale from \$3 to \$25 dollars a month. An important component of the proposal is that low income persons must contribute to the coverage.

## WORKERS COMPENSATION

On Thursday, March 5th, AIF released the following press release regarding AIF's **General Counsel, Tammy Perdue.**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – The **Associated Industries of Florida (AIF)** today announced that Tamela Perdue, general counsel of AIF, will be participating as a panelist in the **31st Workers Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) Annual Issues & Research Conference** in Boston, Mass., on Friday, March 6, 2015.

"Workers' compensation is one of the most important issues for Florida businesses and their employees, and AIF's Workers' Compensation Coalition for Business & Industry played a key role in achieving significant system reforms, which led to a decrease in rates, coupled with increased access to coverage in the last decade," said Perdue. "Our organization remains committed to maintaining Florida's successful workers' compensation system here and we are thrilled to be included in this prestigious conference that WCRI holds each year. I look forward to sharing the successes we've seen here in Florida, as well as learn what has been affective in other states that we could implement here in the State of Florida to improve our system further."

Perdue's panel, "Resilience: Lessons from two decades of reforms," will focus on exploring what has, and what has not worked, in terms of reforming workers' compensation state-by-state in the last 20 years.

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

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