

# WEEKLY UPDATE



**From March 13th, 2015**

## HEALTH CARE

### **SB 7044- Relating to Health Insurance Affordability Exchange**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **SB 7044**, relating to Health Insurance Affordability Exchange, by the **Senate Health Policy Committee**, passed unanimously with 9 yeas and 0 nays through the **Senate Health Policy Committee**.

The Florida Senate took a momentous step in reforming health care coverage in this state. This bill in large part represents the work of AIF and our partners with A Healthy Florida Works, who have been developing proposals that lower costs, increase access and elevate quality since 2013. **AIF's General Counsel, Tammy Perdue, thanked the members of the committee for their wisdom and willingness to advance such a large undertaking.**



**AIF will focus its efforts on proposals that seek to increase the accessibility and affordability of quality health care for Florida residents.**

CEO, Tom Feeney's editorial message ran this week in several media outlets:

March 10, 2015

Last week, the Florida Senate and Senate President Andy Gardiner took a significant step on an issue with profound impacts on Florida taxpayers, businesses and, ultimately, our economy.

The Senate filed SPB 7044, the Florida Health Insurance Affordability Exchange, or FHIX, based on a plan called A Healthy Florida Works. This plan was thoughtfully proposed by a bipartisan coalition of business owners, hospitals, community leaders and individuals who support a fiscally responsible program that draws down Florida's share of federal funds to reform medical coverage for nearly 1 million Floridians.

Health care is one of the most critical issues facing all Floridians and Florida businesses. Not only are Florida businesses faced with rising health insurance premiums, but they are also faced with financial penalties if they cannot provide health care coverage to full-time employees and their dependents. These penalties went into effect in January and are already costing businesses money.

Federal law requires Florida hospitals to provide care to every person who arrives at an emergency room. The cost of paying for uncompensated hospital care in our state, which totaled nearly \$3 billion in 2012, has fallen on the shoulders of Florida families and business owners. This system is expensive and inefficient, often resulting in poor patient outcomes. The cost of caring for the uninsured becomes a hidden tax on businesses, driving up health insurance premiums around 8 percent, or \$1,200, per year. This cost shift is stifling the growth of our small business owners.

Associated Industries of Florida has been working with A Healthy Florida Works since 2013. AIF has forcefully advocated for a Florida-designed, free-market, consumer choice health care system, rather than have a draconian, bureaucratic one-size-fits-all federal scheme imposed upon us.

Florida House leaders have wisely pointed out the problems with an extension of traditional Medicaid. FHIX is a private alternative that reforms this current system through personal responsibility requirements, including job and education training and monthly premium contributions. It establishes a private option program for individuals whose income is up to approximately \$16,000 a year.

Through FHIX, consumers have a choice of managed care plans most of us have today. The program will expire if the federal government reduces its funding commitment below levels currently in law. With this plan, the Florida Legislature has a tremendous opportunity to help more than 1 million of our fellow Floridians get access to affordable care.

Market-based health care coverage for the uninsured can save businesses in our state billions of dollars in annual health care costs, help to spur job creation and keeps the economic engine of Florida's businesses, both small and large, running. Conservative Republican Gov. Mike Pence has enacted a similar free-market alternative in Indiana. FHIX would create 100,000 new and permanent jobs in Florida, while dramatically reducing costs to business owners.

Florida's business community is united in its support for extending health care coverage. A Healthy Florida Works coalition has more than 700 business owners, 20 local chambers of commerce and 112,000 individuals as members. We all stand united in our belief that extending health care coverage is the right thing to do for our state, our businesses and all Floridians.

#### **HB 545- Relating to Telehealth**

On Thursday, March 12th, **HB 545**, relating to Telehealth, by **Rep. Travis Cummings (R-Orange Park)** unanimously passed through the **House Health Quality Subcommittee** with 11 yeas and 0 nays. This bill is designed to encourage the use of Telehealth for increasing access to care for Floridians. Telehealth provides the ability for patients to have access to physicians across the country via Skype.

The next stop for HB 545 is in the **House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee**.

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

## **INSURANCE**

#### **SB 916- Relating to Commercial Insurer Rate Filing Procedures**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **SB 916**, relating to Commercial Insurer Rate Filing, by **Senator Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee)** unanimously passed through the **Senate Banking and Insurance Committee** with 9 yeas and 0 nays. This bill removes inconsistencies in the statute with respect to commercial rate filings. In 2011, **Representative Brad Drake (R-Marianna)** unanimously passed a bill that exempted commercial insurers from filing rates for most types of commercial lines with the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR).

This flexibility was needed since commercial risks are varied, often complex, and need to be uniquely tailored to meet the needs of a particular industry and business. This bill removes a certification requirement to rate filings, and aligns the annual rate filing statute with the exemption for commercial multiple peril insurance and commercial motor vehicle insurance.

As SB 916 unanimously passed through the Banking and Insurance committee, the bill now heads to its second stop in the **Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee**. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF supports removing redundant or burdensome regulations that add no value to the end user, the consumers. AIF also supports a robust and competitive commercial marketplace, as this vibrancy results in better prices and better products for business owners.**

### **SB 1060- Relating to Legislative Ratification**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **SB 1060**, relating to Legislative Ratification, by **Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs)** unanimously passed through the **Senate Banking and Insurance Committee** with 9 yeas and 0 nays. This legislature largely relates to the maximum reimbursement allowances for worker's compensation situations, such as, medical treatment and care.

Proposed by the Division of Workers' Compensation, this legislation addresses a glitch from the implementation of legislative rule authorization. By excluding the adoption of workers' compensation reimbursement manuals from the authorization process, the Division is able to keep reimbursement protocols and rates up to date, which fosters the self-executing nature of the workers' compensation system for the benefit of employees, employers, and employer-carriers.

This bill now heads to its last stop in the **Senate Fiscal Policy Committee**. **AIF stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF has worked hard to preserve and protect an efficient, self-executing, and cost effective workers' compensation system and applauds efforts to ensure such a system continues.**

## **PROPERTY RIGHTS**

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

On Thursday, March 12th, **HB 391**, relating to Location of Utilities, by **Rep. Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola)** unanimously passed through the **House Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee** with 12 yeas and 0 nays. House Bill 391 will clarify the difference between a Right of Way 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 Thursday, March 12th, **HB 413**, relating to Low-Voltage Alarm Systems by **Rep. Bob Cortes (R-Maitland)** unanimously passed through the **House Regulatory Affairs Committee** with 16 yeas and 0 nays.

The bill has now been placed on the calendar for its second reading.

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.. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**



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

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **SB 1046- Relating to the Entertainment Industry**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **SB 1046**, relating to the Entertainment Industry, by **Senator Nancy Detert (R-Venice)** unanimously passed through the **Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee** with 6 yeas and 0 nays.

This bill restructures Florida's approach to the entertainment industry in the state. One main benefit of this bill that is important to AIF and its members is the increased percentage of Florida residents that must be employed in qualified productions.



The next stop for SB 1046 is the **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development**. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

**AIF supports the incentivizing of the Entertainment Industry here in Florida, as it will create more jobs for the citizens of Florida.**

## LEGAL & JUDICIAL

### **SB 224- Relating to Public Records/Public Agency Contracts**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **SB 224**, relating to Public Records/ Public Agency Contracts, by **Senator Wilton Simpson (R-New Port Richey)** unanimously passed through the **Senate Judiciary Committee** with 10 yeas and 0 nays.

This bill addresses the procedure for obtaining records relating to a public agency's contract for services with a private contractor. As it stands today, the Florida Constitution provides every person the right to inspect or copy any public record made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or of persons acting on their behalf. However, the issue is who the party responsible for providing these public records is. If this bill becomes law, requests for records relating to a public agency's contract for services must be made to the public agency instead of the contractor. An agency who receives a request for records possessed by a contractor must attempt to obtain the records from the contractor. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**



**AIF supports legislation that reduces frivolous law suits against Florida businesses.**

## TRANSPORTATION

### **HB 817- Relating to Transportation Network Companies**

On Tuesday, March 10th, **HB 817**, relating to Transportation Network Companies, by **Rep. Matthew Gaetz (R-Fort Walton Beach)** passed through the **House Transportation & Ports Subcommittee** with 9 yeas and 3 nays.

Currently, Transportation Network Companies (TNC) are not referenced in the state of Florida's statute, however, some jurisdictions at the local level have enacted regulations regarding the TNC. This bill prompts the state to create a regulatory framework for the operation of TNC's, instead of regulations being created at the local level. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**



**AIF supports statewide digital transportation service policies to create price competition, promote consumer choice, enhance customer experience, create jobs and remove anti-competitive local regulations.**

## ENVIRONMENT & AGRICULTURE

### **SB 918- Relating to Environmental Resources**

On Wednesday, March 11th, **SB 918**, relating to Environmental Resources, by **Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness)** was held in a workshop with the **Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee**. Panels of representatives from several state departments, plus the five water management districts were present. The bill provides for the protection of springs and other water resources in Florida, creates a council to provide recommendations for funding water projects throughout the state, provides transparency for the process by which projects are submitted and selected, and provides for statewide consistency in data collection and analysis. AIF will continue to work with Senators and staff on the proposed bill. **Legal counsel for AIF's Florida H2O Coalition, Greg Munson, stood to testify on behalf of AIF at the workshop.**

**AIF supports funding science-based programs and projects to improve the water quality and water quantity of Florida's major first-magnitude springs.**

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

On Tuesday, March 10th, **HB 569**, relating to Agritourism, by **Rep. Neil Combee (R-Auburndale)** unanimously passed the **House Local Government Affairs Subcommittee** with 12 yeas and 0 nays. This is the second stop for House Bill 569, and now heads to the **House State Affairs Committee**.

The bill would remove the ability of local governments to regulate these activities of Agritourism. **AIF again stood in support of this bill.**

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

## **EDUCATION & WORKFORCE**

On Wednesday, March 11th, **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis**, spoke on charter schools during the **House K-12 Subcommittee**. Here is what he had to say on behalf of AIF regarding charter schools.



“Charter schools are an important part of Florida's education system. They provide choices and options for Florida families. They also create competition and we know that competition makes everyone better. We support high quality charter schools and common sense regulations that do not blunt the growth of charter schools. More choices and more options for Florida families help create a stronger more competitive workforce.”