



DAILY BRIEF

From February 3, 2016

ENERGY

On Wednesday, February 3rd, **SB 90**, relating to the Natural Gas Rebate Program, by **Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby)** passed through **Senate Appropriations Committee** unanimously with 18 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

Since 2013 there has been a Natural Gas Fuel Fleet Vehicle Rebate Program (Program) created within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) to "help reduce transportation costs in this state and encourage freight mobility investments that contribute to the economic growth of the state." Beginning with Fiscal Year 2013-2014 and continuing through Fiscal Year 2017-2018 (five years), DACS is required to award rebates, to those eligible, for the costs of converting a diesel- or gasoline-powered motor vehicle to a natural gas fuel-powered motor vehicle on or after July 1, 2013. An applicant is eligible to receive a maximum rebate of \$25,000 per vehicle up to a total of \$250,000 per applicant per fiscal year, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Two amendments, by **Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange)** were adopted today. One amendment made only technical changes to the bill while the other made changes to applicants who can receive the excess funds from the Program. Before this amendment, DACS had the authority to use any unencumbered funds to award additional rebates to those who may have already received the rebate. After the adoption of this amendment governmental applicants will have preference to these funds and any excess funds beyond that may be used by commercial applicants. These rebates will still be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible applicants.

SB 90 will now go to the floor of the Senate for consideration.

AIF supports the natural gas fuel fleet vehicle rebate program, specifically the authorization of DACS to award additional rebates to applicants from unencumbered funds after each fiscal year.

TAXATION

FTC4- Relating to Taxation

On Wednesday, February 3rd, **FTC4**, relating to Taxation, by the **House Finance & Tax Committee** was heard in the **House Finance & Tax Committee** and passed with 11 yeas and 0 nays. **AIF's Brewster Bevis spoke in support of this tax package as it includes many of AIF's top priorities for the 2016 Session.**

FTC4 aims to cut taxes in the state of Florida for the 2016-2017 fiscal year by a grand total of \$991.7 million. Much like last year's House tax package, this legislation will encompass some of our top taxation priorities that are of the utmost importance to our member, such as: the permanent reduction of the business rent tax from 6% to 5% beginning January 1, 2017, with an additional percent reduction to 4% in the calendar year 2018 only; makes sales tax exemptions for certain manufacturing machinery and equipment purchased by any eligible manufacturing businesses permanent; and provides a ten-day "back-to-school" holiday for clothing, footwear, school supplies and computers; a one-day "technology" sales holiday on computers and related accessories; and a one-day "small business" holiday for sales by small businesses.

This tax package will now head to the House floor for consideration.

AIF supports tax cuts for Florida's consumers and businesses.

Below is a statement attributed to Brewster Bevis on the House Tax package:

**AIF Statement Applauding the Passage of the House Tax Package
by the House Finance & Tax Committee**

*Florida's Leading Business Advocate Lauds Repeal of
Manufacturing Equipment Sales Tax & Commercial Lease Tax*

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 regarding the passage of the House tax package by the House Finance and Tax Committee. AIF lauds the inclusion of language to repeal the manufacturing equipment sales tax and the commercial lease tax.

“AIF applauds the House for passing a business-friendly tax package out of the House Finance & Tax Committee today.

“As Florida’s leader in manufacturing and Florida’s affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers, AIF is pleased that members recognize the importance of permanently eliminating the sales tax imposed on the purchase of manufacturing equipment and machinery. Not only will this tax exemption help elevate manufacturing in Florida, it will help diversify our economy and grow our job base.

“AIF is also pleased that the House included language in its tax package that reduces the business rent tax. This tax reduction will bolster our economy and make Florida a more attractive place to do business.

“We thank Chairman Matt Gaetz and members of the House for supporting these pro-growth and business-friendly measures.”

###

TRANSPORTATION

HB 7027-Relating to Department of Transportation

On Wednesday, February 3rd, **HB 7027**, relating to the Department of Transportation, by the **House Transportation & Ports Subcommittee** and **Rep. Patrick Rooney Jr. (R-Palm Beach Gardens)** passed through the House floor by a vote of 117 yeas to 2 nays.

HB 7027, which is one of two substantial transportation and port related bills moving through the House, contains a number of important provisions for AIF and its members.

One of AIF’s top transportation priorities, the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic Development Program (FSTED), is increased by \$10million (\$25 million) in HB 7027. This program which supports growth and economic activity at the state’s ports serves as an important program and one that has been extremely successful for the state. Additionally, the bill aids some of the state’s smaller contractors by creating the Business Development Program which is designed to help companies navigate procurements for road projects while increasing competition for the work. It also will require the state’s legislative budget commission to approve any DOT Work Plan additions over \$3million.

HB 7027 creates a state FDOT Financing Corporation which will serve as a financing mechanism for Public Private Partnerships (P3s) across the state. By creating the FDOT Financing Corporation, the state would offer a mechanism to provide reliable, state bonds for up front financing of P3 projects in the state. In doing so, the Department believes this approach would leverage lower capital costs provided to the municipal bond markets as an option for securing financing for the upfront costs of P3 projects. Several members of the committee expressed concerns about this proposal however, citing existing state programs and financing options as being already available for P3 projects.

This bill will now head to the Senate floor for consideration.

AIF supports increasing the FSTED funding and spending cap levels from \$15 million to \$25 million, a very important provision for Florida’s ports. AIF also supports creating the FDOT Business Development Program as a mechanism to help educate and provide expertise to Florida’s small businesses looking to do work in the Department’s often-complex procurement process.

WORKFORCE

SB 468- Relating to Computer Coding Instruction

On Wednesday, February 3rd, **SB 468**, relating to Computer Coding Instruction, by **Senator Jeremy Ring (D-Margate)** was heard by the **Senate Appropriations Committee** and passed by a vote of 17 yeas to 1 nay. **AIF's Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, stood in support of this bill.**

SB 468 would allow high school students the option of taking computer coding courses along with a related industry certification to satisfy the foreign language requirement currently in place. Under this bill high schools will provide students the opportunity to substitute two credits in computer coding and a related industry certification for two credits sequential foreign language courses (i.e. Spanish I and Spanish II; Latin I and Latin II; French I and French II; etc.).

The bill would require each district school board to submit a plan for offering computer coding to the Education Commissioner, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 1, 2017.

Furthermore, SB 468, would require the Florida College System institutions and state universities to acknowledge computer coding course credits as foreign language credits.

This bill will now head to the Senate floor for consideration.

AIF supports legislation that will provide Florida's students the opportunity to become proficient in computer coding, which will in turn prepare our states next generation for a technology driven economy.