



Florida **Billboard**

2018 Legislative Session *Week Eight*

March 2nd, 2018

Week eight has officially come to a close, and the Florida legislature lurches into the final week of session. During the past week, several of Americans for Prosperity-Florida's key priorities continued to inch toward the goal line.

Several items passed through their final committee assignments. Among these, the criminal justice data transparency package (SB 1218) passed through its final Senate committee. The House's education package (HB 7055) passed through its final Senate committee and saw its second Senate floor reading, and several components of the campus free speech bill (HB 909) were amended onto the House version of the higher education package (HB 423), and the Senate version of the higher education package is now in its 3rd and final reading in the House. And finally, direct primary care legislation (SB 80) moved through its third and final Senate committee, now sitting on 2nd reading.

Several bills also passed through their respective chambers as well. Among these, one of the most aptly-numbered and patriotic proposals to be filed this session, SB 1776, passed through the Senate in a 36-1 vote. The bill will preempt the local regulation which specifically restricts private property owners from having vegetable gardens in their front yards. In addition, SB 920, legislation that would secure market access to credit for tens of thousands of Floridians, also passed the Senate floor in a 31-5 vote. The House version, HB 857, is currently on 2nd reading.

Hold onto your seats, lovers of economic freedom! The final week is going to be a fast and furious one!

Entries / Exits

Entries

HB 423 / SB 4 - Higher Education - Rep. Rodrigues / Sen. Galvano
HB 961 / SB 1224 - Malt Beverages - Rep. Gruters / Sen. Bradley
SB 1218 - Criminal Justice Data Transparency - Sen. Brandes

Exits

HB 669 - Beverage Law - Rep. Perez
SB 1678 - Criminal Justice Data Transparency - Sen. Stargel

Billboard - House of Representatives

Not Yet Assigned:

Committees

Agriculture & Property Rights

HB 207 (1st)

Commerce

HB 691 (2nd)

Health & Human Services

Health Quality

HB 561 (1st)

Justice Appropriations

Post-Secondary Education

HB 49 (1st)

Ways & Means

HB 939 (1st) HB 809 (1st)

Appropriations

HB 5101 (1st)

Education

Health Care Appropriations

**HB 657 (2nd)
HB 683 (2nd)**

Insurance & Banking

HB 1311 (1st)

Local, Fed & Vet Affairs

HB 6039 (1st)

PreK-12 Appropriations

HB 829 (2nd)

HB 6047 (1st)

Careers & Competition

**HB 6005 (1st) HB 341 (1st)
HB 741 (1st)
HB 1219 (1st)
HB 1441 (1st)**

Gov't Accountability

**HB 773 (1st)
HB 791 (3rd)**

Health Innovation

**HB 403 (1st)
HB 911 (1st)
HB 1083 (1st)
HB 1273 (1st)**

Judiciary

Oversight, Transparency & Administration

HB 373 (1st)

PreK-12 Innovation

HB 925 (1st)

House Floor

2nd Reading

**HB 423 HB 6037
HB 857
HB 989
HB 1065**

3rd Reading

**HB 1 HB 7087
HB 909
HB 1019
HB 1041**

Sent to Senate

**HB 3 HB 17 HB 83 HB 667 HB 7001
HB 7 HB 23 HB 273 HB 725 HB 7055
HB 11 HB 25 HB 317 HB 751 HB 7071
HB 13 HB 27 HB 459 HB 961
HB 15 HB 37 HB 585 HB 973**

Returned from Senate

Billboard - Senate

Not Yet Assigned:

Committees

Appropriations

SB 272 (3rd) **SB 1218 (3rd)**
SB 354 (2nd) **SB 1742 (2nd)**
SB 658 (3rd) **SB 758 (3rd)**
SB 1114 (3rd)
SB 1172 (3rd)

Banking & Insurance

SB 58 (1st) **SB 302 (1st)**

Commerce & Tourism

SB 198 (1st) **SB 166 (1st)**
SB 352 (1st)
SB 526 (2nd)
SB 778 (1st)
SB 898 (1st)
SB 1036 (1st)

Community Affairs

SB 60 (2nd) **SB 1014 (1st)**
SB 312 (2nd)
SB 362 (1st)

Education

SB 1080 (1st) **SB 216 (1st)**
SB 318 (1st)
SB 586 (1st)
SB 1266 (1st)

Finance & Tax Appropriations

SB 236 (2nd)

Gov't Oversight & Accountability

SB 956 (1st) **SB 114 (1st)**
SB 980 (1st)
SB 1268 (1st)

Health Policy

SB 708 (1st) **SB 638 (1st)**
SB 1492 (1st) **SB 1136 (1st)**
SB 1498 (1st)

HHS Approps

SB 250 (2nd)

Judiciary

SB 750 (2nd) **SB 1076 (2nd)**
SB 1234 (2nd)

PreK-12 Appropriations

SB 1172 (2nd)

Regulated Industries

SB 1868 (1st)

Rules

SB 1126 (2nd)
SB 1142 (3rd)
SB 1426 (3rd)

Transportation, Tourism & Economic Development Appropriations

SB 432 (2nd) **SB 1606 (3rd)**
SB 912 (2nd)
SB 1228 (2nd)
SB 1714 (2nd)

Senate Floor

2nd Reading

SB 80
SB 296
SB 1020
SB 1144
SB 1224

3rd Reading

Sent to House

SB 4
SB 920
SB 1776

SB 440

Returned from House

Action Board

Issue	House Bill	Key Vote Letters				Senate Bill	Key Vote Letters			
Hope Scholarship	HB 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	SB 1172	✓	✓		
Local Incentive and Tourism Transparency	HB 3	✓	✓	✓		SB 1714	✓			
Local Government Transparency	HB 7	✓	✓			SB 1426	✓	✓	✓	
Government Accountability	HB 11	✓	✓			SB 354	✓	✓		
Sports Franchise Incentive Restrictions	HB 13	✓	✓			SB 352				
Deregulation of Occupational and Business Licenses	HB 15	✓	✓			SB 526	✓			
Community Redevelopment Organizations	HB 17	✓	✓							
Ambulatory Surgical Centers	HB 23	✓	✓			SB 250	✓			
Labor Organizations	HB 25	✓	✓			SB 1036				
Certificates of Need for Hospitals	HB 27	✓	✓			SB 1492				
Direct Primary Care	HB 37	✓	✓			SB 80	✓	✓	✓	
Regulatory Cost Transparency	HB 83	✓	✓	✓		SB 912	✓			
Public Records	HB 273	✓	✓			SB 750	✓	✓		
Local Tax Referenda	HB 317	✓	✓	✓	✓	SB 272	✓	✓	✓	
Annual Business Reports and Fees	HB 373					SB 1228	✓			
Higher Education Package	HB 423	✓				SB 4				
Public Records	HB 459	✓	✓	✓		SB 750	✓	✓		
Tourist Development Tax	HB 585	✓	✓	✓		SB 658	✓	✓		
Loosening Licensing Requirements for Foreign Born Physicians	HB 657	✓	✓							

Action Board

Issue	House Bill	Key Vote Letters				Senate Bill	Key Vote Letters			
Alcohol Deliveries	HB 667	✓	✓	✓		SB 1020	✓	✓	✓	
Beverage Law	HB 669	✓				SB 296	✓	✓	✓	
Dental Therapy	HB 683	✓	✓			SB 1498				
Permit Fees	HB 725	✓	✓			SB 1144	✓	✓	✓	
Public Assistance Reform	HB 751	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Vacation Rentals	HB 773	✓								
Red Tape Reduction	HB 791	✓	✓			SB 1268				
McKay Scholarship Eligibility Expansion	HB 829	✓				SB 1080				
Access to Credit	HB 857	✓	✓			SB 920	✓	✓	✓	
Free Speech on College Campuses	HB 909	✓	✓	✓	✓	SB 1234	✓	✓		
	HB 961	✓	✓			SB 1224	✓			
Expansion of PA and ARNP Duties	HB 973	✓	✓	✓		SB 708				
Public Campaign Finance	HB 989	✓	✓							
Financial Reporting	HB 1019	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Professional Regulation	HB 1041	✓	✓	✓	✓	SB 1114	✓	✓	✓	
Expunction of Criminal Records	HB 1065	✓	✓	✓	✓	SB 1142	✓			
Deregulation of Check Cashers and Foreign Currency Exchangers	HB 1311	✓				SB 1126	✓			
Vegetable Gardens						SB 1776	✓	✓	✓	
Deregulation of Fireworks	HB 6037	✓	✓			SB 198	✓			
Supermajority Vote for New Taxes and Fees	HB 7001	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
House Education Package	HB 7055	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	

Action Board

Issue	House Bill	Key Vote Letters				Senate Bill	Key Vote Letters			
Criminal Justice Data Transparency	HB 7071	✓	✓	✓		SB 1218	✓	✓		
House Tax Package	HB 7087	✓	✓	✓						
Film Incentives	HB 341					SB 1606	✓	✓		
Florida Veterans Care	HB 403					SB 440	✓			
Licensure of Diabetes Educators	HB 561					SB 758	✓	✓		
Restrictions on Franchises	HB 1219					SB 1076	✓	✓		

Support Bills

HB 1 / SB 1172 – Hope Scholarship Program – Rep. Donalds / Sen. Galvano

This bill proposes the creation of a new school choice program in Florida, freeing students who have been victims of bullying or harassment and giving the opportunity to ‘vote with their feet’ to earn their education elsewhere, whether to attend another public school or to receive a scholarship for attending a private school.

HB 3 / SB 1714 – Local Incentive and Tourism Transparency – Rep. Grant (M) / Sen. Perry

Building on the progress made from last year’s reforms of Visit Florida and Enterprise Florida, this bill introduces several similar transparency measures at the local level for economic development agencies and visitor bureaus. Among them, not only must annual disclosures be filed when board members of these local agencies have conflicts of interest but agencies are required to explicitly avoid, neutralize, or mitigate any significant organizational conflicts of interest before entering into contracts.

HB 7 / SB 1426 – Local Government Transparency – Rep. Burton / Sen. Lee

Every month, families across the Sunshine State keep careful watch of their finances, sticking to a budget. Elected officials, as spenders of tax money pulled from millions of family budgets, would do well to embrace such “dinner table” transparency and accountability. One notable way this bill ensures openness is by requiring local government bodies post their voting records whenever voting to increase taxes or take on more debt at the expense of the taxpayers. In addition, any local economic development agency spending more than \$25,000 in tax dollars on incentives will be required to provide more detail in their annual reports to the Florida legislature’s economists at the Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

HB 11 / SB 354 – Government Accountability – Rep. Metz / Sen. Stargel

While other proposals this year have focused on openness and transparency, this bill places more emphasis on accountability. This bill introduces reporting requirements of government bodies at the local and state level, including state agencies, school districts and water management districts. Not only will internal controls be established that will make it easier to detect waste, fraud and abuse, but budget documents will be more readily available online for citizens throughout the process.

HB 13 / SB 352 - Sports Franchise Incentive Restrictions - Rep. Avila / Sen. Garcia

As if it is not bad enough that state and local governments funnel hundreds of millions in current and future tax dollars to fund stadium construction for sports teams worth hundreds of millions of dollars already, some local governments have added insult to injury, leasing the land the stadium is built on at well below market value. This bill would put an end to this practice, prohibiting a sports franchise from building, renovating or improving a stadium on leased public land and requiring any purchase of public land to be at fair market value.

HB 15 / SB 526 - Deregulation of Occupational and Business Licenses - Rep. Beshears / Sen. Brandes

No one should be required to seek a permission slip from a licensing board or government bureaucrat to work in a field in which they are otherwise qualified. Building on the momentum of last year's deregulation package, which stopped just short of the goal line, this bill includes many similar components. The contents of SB 526 have been amended onto SB 1114, a bill requiring that licensing boards provide declaratory statements for Floridians preparing to re-enter society, regarding their chances for obtaining a license in a given field.

HB 17 – Community Redevelopment Organizations – Rep. Raburn

Community Redevelopment Agencies are meant to redevelop blighted areas of towns across the state rather than remain permanent projects. However, most CRAs have had mixed results, at best, and in many cases, have been rife with conflicts of interest, waste, and abuse. This bill begins to phase out existing CRAs across Florida and, like SB 432, requires four hours of ethics training for board members.

HB 23 / SB 250 - Ambulatory Surgical Centers - Rep. Renner / Sen. Steube

This bill would accomplish what should be an uncontroversial idea: that surgery patients are not forced out of ambulatory surgical centers (ASC) during the same day their surgeries are performed. Unfortunately, current statute requires that Not only do ASCs lower the prices paid by patients, but they provide more options in locations with limited competition. Removing this unnecessary burden would increase the outpatient surgery options available to Floridians.

Support Bills

HB 25 / SB 1036 - Labor Organizations - Rep. Plakon / Sen. Steube

Unfortunately for many state employees in Florida, the choice of whether to be represented by a union in their employee contract negotiations was never offered to them. In some cases, collective bargaining units with hundreds and sometimes thousands of workers are given no choice but to be represented by unions with membership rates as small as 1-2 percent. Although Florida is a Right to Work state, the employees who are not union members are still required to live with whatever the union negotiates on their behalf. This bill would require additional info on annual certification paperwork for public sector unions, including the total number of employees the union represents in the bargaining unit and how many of them are dues-paying members. Any unions with less than 50% dues-paying members would be required to have a recertification election. At that point, each of the employees across the collective bargaining unit would be free to decide for themselves if they really want to be represented or not.

HB 27 / SB 1492 – Certificate of Need for Hospitals – Rep. Fitzenhagen / Sen. Brandes

While the original motivations for Certificates of Need laws are long gone, these unnecessary laws amount to granting government monopolies because if a new hospital wants to open up, it first has to prove that the community needs it and to ask the permission of the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). This bill eliminates Certificates of Need for hospitals and hospital services in Florida, which have done little but to throw up needless barriers between the healthcare providers who wanted to open brand new hospital here but did not have the right permission slip.

HB 37 / SB 80 – Direct Primary Care – Rep. Burgess / Sen. Lee

After years of poking and prodding the market with regulations, subsidies, and tax exemptions, government red tape is hopelessly tangled. But one of the more promising health care reforms is notable because it gets back to the basics: doctor and patient. By bypassing the insurance companies that have often carried all of the government red tape, physician-entrepreneurs using the direct primary care payment model have discovered how to provide primary care for \$25-\$100 per person. In the spirit of simply getting out of the way, this bill's primary purpose is to stipulate that these simple, cost-effective agreements do not constitute insurance—and should not be regulated as insurance.

HB 58 - Corporate Income Tax Reduction - Sen. Hukill

This straightforward proposal would increase the maximum amount exempted in corporate income taxes by a flat \$25,000, going from \$50,000 to \$75,000. Because this is a tax that every business pays, to the exclusion of no one, it is a win-win for everyone. Not only would this bill's passage be a boon for every business in Florida, but customers would benefit as well, as businesses would have more wiggle room to compete through lower prices or higher quality.

HB 83 / SB 912 - Regulatory Cost Transparency - Rep. Spano / Sen. Broxson

It has often been said that there is no such thing as a free lunch. This is especially true when applied to government regulation, which is often written with little regard for how steep of costs might be imposed on citizens or how difficult it might make lives in the process. By requiring estimated regulatory costs to be posted on an agency website before adoption or amendment, not only can less costly alternatives be considered, but those writing the regulation in the first place will be more cost-conscious when they do.

HB 207 / SB 362 – Private Property Protection – Rep. McClain & Rep. Clemons / Sen. Perry

This bill requires local government to incorporate the protection of private property rights into their growth management plans by July 2020. Better yet, within a year of adopting the private property rights element, the governing body would be required to review and revise its land development regulations to reflect it.

HB 273 / SB 750 – Public Records – Rep. Rodrigues / Sen. Perry

This bill intends to put a halt to a troubling trend going on across the country by preventing governments in Florida from taking their own citizens to court over public records requests. Not only do these legal fights discourage open, transparent government, but they have chilling effects on citizens' abilities to trust their own government officials.

SB 296 - Beverage Law – Sen. Brandes

This bill would reduce several ridiculous, unreasonable restrictions on alcohol sales in Florida, including allowing cider to be sold in growlers like beer already is and allowing restaurant patrons to take home bottles of wine without first having to purchase a full course meal.

SB 312 - Excise Tax Exemptions - Sen. Steube

This bill would ensure that the transfer of deeds to homestead property within Florida can transfer between spouses without being taxable.

Support Bills

HB 317 / SB 272 - Local Tax Referenda - Rep. Ingoglia / Sen. Brandes

Tax referendums should not come and go without citizens being made fully aware. This bill requires any referendum to levy a discretionary sales surtax must be held during either a primary or a general election. Any such referendum held during a primary election must be approved by at least 60 percent of electors voting on the ballot question. A referendum held during a general election may be approved by a simple majority of electors voting on the question, as is currently the case.

HB 373 / SB 1228 - Annual Business Organization Reports and Fees - Rep. Grant (M) / Sen. Hukill

This bill would allow businesses in Florida to send their annual reports to the Department of State on a biennial basis, freeing them from the need to do it every year. Even if only a small victory over government paperwork, it is still saved time that Sunshine State entrepreneurs can devote back into their families or businesses.

HB 423 / SB 4 - Higher Education - Rep. Rodrigues / Sen. Galvano

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution represents the American founders' belief that the freedom of thought and speech are natural rights by birth and that government was just our shared project to protect those rights. Unfortunately, on many public college and university campuses, the spirit of our First Amendment has been replaced by arbitrary limits on the the speech of students. This bill incorporates several components of HB 909, eliminating so-called "free speech zones", which place restrictions on the location of campus speech. In addition, the bill will help to ensure that administrators do not arbitrarily exercise authority over the allowance of some speech to the exclusion of others, creating a cause of action with declaratory and injunctive relief

HB 432 - Community Redevelopment Agencies Reform - Sen. Lee

Community Redevelopment Agencies were originally intended to be anything but permanent projects, meant to redevelop blighted areas of towns across the state. However, most CRAs have had mixed results, at best. This bill requires more accountability from CRAs to the local government that created it, including several reporting requirements that can help taxpayers better understand how their money was spent and if the program achieved its goals. Like HB 17, this proposal also requires four hours of ethics training for board members.

HB 459 / SB 956 - Public Records Exemptions - Rep. Massullo / Sen. Mayfield

This bill will improve the transparency in agency contracts by ensuring that the substance of state contracts—including the amount of money paid, the payment structure, and any incentives—is not exempt from public record. Not only will this be more in line with the intent of public records laws, but it will reduce the likelihood that overly-broad trade secrets will prevent the public from knowing how their tax dollars are being spent

HB 585 / SB 658 - Tourist Development Tax - Rep. Fine / Sen. Brandes

This bill gives local governments more freedom to direct Tourist Development Tax revenue toward community needs. This bill expands the potential uses of the Tourist Development Tax, allowing that tax revenue to be spent toward public facilities within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied, provided that the public facilities will increase tourist related business activities or the special district. These revenues can be used for land acquisition, land improvement, design or engineering costs, etc. and may be used toward capital improvements with a life expectancy of 5+ years, including transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and pedestrian facilities.

HB 657 - Loosening Licensing Requirements for Foreign-Born Physicians - Rep. Diaz (M)

Florida is already facing a shortage of physicians, but by reducing the potential barriers faced by otherwise-qualified physicians, citizens of the Sunshine State can benefit from increased access to medical care. This bill would expand the range of experiences that could qualify for meeting the minimum standards of licensing needed by foreign-born physicians who move to Florida.

HB 667 / SB 1020 - Alcohol Deliveries - Rep. Perez / Sen. Young

Laws and regulations which micromanage the relationship between buyers and sellers, especially ones that dictate how and when a service can be provided, decrease efficiency and often mean consumers get less value. Currently, the laws only allow alcohol deliveries to be made by vendors if orders were physically placed at the place of business, over the phone or by mail. This bill allow for vendor delivery if the order was made online, and free through third parties.

Support Bills

HB 857 / SB 920 - Deferred Presentment Transactions - Rep. Grant / Sen. Bradley

This proposal authorizes a new financial product—deferred presentment installment transactions—to be offered in the Florida, providing meaningful access to credit for many Floridians who might have few secure options otherwise. Evidence from researchers at Stanford, Cornell, and the Federal Reserve’s Board of Governors suggests that without sufficient legal access to “payday loans”, most people will seek out less secure or more costly credit, like risking their valuables at pawn shops or using overdraft protection services in a bank account. To the extent that short-term, high-interest loans continue to meet unique needs, many Floridians benefit from additional flexibility in their budgets. The Sunshine State can meaningfully expand opportunities for those experiencing an emergency financial need or who may not have access to more traditional credit by loosening regulatory restrictions.

HB 683 / SB 1498 – Dental Therapist – Rep. Perez / Sen. Brandes

This bill would create an intermediate role of "dental therapist", who could operate under the supervision of a dentist and a clearly defined scope of practice. Just like the introduction of nurse practitioners programs relieved the burden of medical care falling on physicians, the introduction of dental therapists could mean greater access to dental care, especially for low income and uninsured patients. In Minnesota, the introduction of dental therapists meant as many as one-third of patients saw decreased wait times, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, dental assistants treated as many as 90% of Minnesota’s uninsured or patients on public assistance.

HB 691 / SB 898 - Cutting Red-Tape for Self-Storage Facilities - Rep. Moraitis / Sen. Perry

This bill reduces the burden of what had become a mandate on self-storage facilities. After being required to send a certified letter to consumers who are past due, self-storage facilities in Florida are required to advertise the sale of the self-storage units' contents for two weeks in a newspaper of general circulation. This bill would reduce the effect of the monopoly granted to local newspapers by allowing self-storage facilities to meet the advertising requirements by publishing this information on a public website for 14 consecutive days.

HB 725 / SB 1144 – Permit Fees – Rep. Williamson / Sen. Perry

The costs of red-tape often go unseen, especially in adhering to the countless pages of the building codes for building or maintaining a building. This bill will require that local governments post its permit and inspection fees on their websites and publish reports with several transparency measures, including direct and indirect costs incurred by local government to implement the Florida Building Code and revenue derived from fees and fines.

HB 751 – Public Assistance Reform – Rep. Eagle

There is great value in work, not just for the increase in income that it provides, but research consistently shows that it also brings with it a sense of accomplishment. By increasing the enforcement of work requirements and helping recipients of temporary cash assistance develop a work plan, as this proposal does, more Floridians will be more prosperous and more independent.

HB 773 - Vacation Rentals - Rep. La Rosa

This bill extends the state preemption on vacation rentals. while providing that local governments still regulate problems that might arise as a result of vacation rentals --provided such regulation applies equally to all residential properties, regardless of whether it is a vacation rental, long term rental, or non-rental. In addition, the state's preemption is preserved, and even extended, such that local governments can make their laws, ordinances or regulations less restrictive.

HB 791 / SB 1268 – Regulatory Reform – Rep. Diaz & Rep. Ingoglia / Sen. Perry

This bill establishes the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council, whose members’ primary purpose is to dig through the Florida Administrative Code to identify rules that are duplicative, obsolete, especially burdensome, disproportionately harm small businesses with fewer than 100 employees, or disproportionately affect businesses with annual revenue less than \$5m. To encourage agencies to be more judicious with their writing of future rules, the proposal also introduces a ceiling on the number of regulatory requirements that limit the introduction of future agency rules. For every new rule introduced, at least one must be cut: “one-in, one-out”.

HB 829 / SB 1080 – McKay Scholarship Eligibility Expansion – Rep. Plasencia / Sen. Baxley

Just as every single student learns and grows differently, it stands to reason that every student's needs are different. For Florida's students with disabilities, this is especially true. This proposal expands access to the McKay Scholarship by allowing qualifying medical diagnoses to be made by physicians in other states or territories, freeing more Sunshine State families to benefit from attending schools that best meet their needs.

Support Bills

HB 909 / SB 1234 - Free Speech on College Campuses - Rep. Rommel / Sen. Baxley

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution represents the American founders' belief that the freedom of thought and speech are natural rights by birth and that government was just our shared project to protect those rights. Unfortunately, on many public college and university campuses, the spirit of our First Amendment has been replaced by arbitrary limits on the the speech of students. This bill would eliminate the so-called "free speech zones", which place restrictions on the location of campus speech. In addition, the bill will help to ensure that administrators do not arbitrarily exercise authority over the allowance of some speech to the exclusion of others, creating a cause of action for students to sue if this right is abridged.

HB 939 / SB 60 - Reduction in Sales Tax on Commercial Leases – Rep. Toledo / Sen. Hukill

Florida is the only state in the country to even levy a sales tax on commercial leases. Whether its rent paid for leasing a building or rent paid for leasing equipment, this applies equally to all. Last year, Florida reduced this uncompetitive tax from 6% to 5.8%. This follow-up bill would continue by bringing it down from 5.8% to 5%, potentially more than \$200 million in savings.

HB 961 / SB 1224 - Malt Beverages - Rep. Gruters / Sen. Bradley

This bill will allow Florida's restaurants to accept glassware at-cost from malt beverage manufacturers and at no cost from Florida distributors. Every single day, Florida's entrepreneurs seek out new and more creative ways to best meet to create value for consumers. These businesses compete in many different ways, including price, quality, convenience, reliability, and loyalty. Consumers—not government—are in the best position to decide how businesses should best compete to meet their unique needs. In what should be a longer-term conversation on reducing the arbitrary burdens created by Florida's uncompetitive, Prohibition-era alcohol laws, this is just one small, modest step toward reducing the state's burdensome role in the industry.

HB 973 / SB 708 – Expansion of PA and ARNP Duties – Rep. Daniels & Rep. Plasencia / Sen. Brandes

Floridians are currently the victims of a physician shortage, due in no small part to restrictive regulations and licensing requirements. This mean that patients wait longer to receive healthcare, and fewer enjoy more meaningful access. This proposal expands the range of legally-performable duties that can be performed by Florida's highly-skilled physician assistants and advanced registered nurse practitioners. Not only will this free physicians to spend more time with patients, but it will increase the efficiency of healthcare providers, who will be more free to discover the most efficient ways to meet patient needs.

HJR 989 – Public Campaign Finance – Rep. White

The public financing of political campaigns is sometimes promoted as a cure-all which can make uncompetitive political races competitive. Unfortunately for Floridians, not only has the state's program failed to achieve its goals, but, like every other government program, is funded with taxpayer dollars. At best, the practice of committing millions of taxpayer dollars to subsidize political aspirations is wasteful. At worst, it forces citizens to fund speech with which they may disagree. This resolution repeals Section 7 of Article VI of the Florida Constitution, ending the constitutional basis that taxpayer dollars be used as matching funds for political campaigns for elected statewide office.

HB 1019 – Financial Reporting – Rep. La Rosa

Floridians cannot hold public officials accountable for good stewardship of their tax dollars if documentation is not made readily available or if residents are inadvertently excluded by a casual sense of what some elected officials might refer to as "business as usual". Continuing on a theme, this proposal introduces several changes to financial reporting requirements. Several levels of government and several government entities, including water management districts, school districts and special districts will be required to submit financial reports to the legislature's economists at the Office of Economic and Demographic Research. In addition, each governmental entity must retain an online posting of its budget on its website for five years. Finally, the bill would give teeth to accountability measures by requiring, rather than authorizing, the Legislative Auditing Committee to schedule hearings if a governmental entity fails to comply with reporting requirements.

HB 1041 / SB 1114 - Professional Regulation – Rep. Plakon / Sen. Brandes

In integrating back into society, few barriers are as difficult for those with criminal records to overcome than getting back to work--and being gainfully employed has been shown to reduce the chances of recidivism. This bill would allow Floridians to seek declaratory statements from an agency regarding their ability to obtain a license, registration, or certificate, in light of a criminal history. Importantly, this would give more guidance to those reentering the workforce on what, if anything, could be done to reduce uncertainty and to show a capacity for meaningfully returning to work in their chosen profession.

Support Bills

HB 1065 / SB 1142 – Expunction of Criminal Records – Rep. Eagle / Sen. Steube

For tens of millions around the country, a criminal history record is a barrier to gainful employment, finding a home, or getting a license. In Florida, though, even those defendants who are found not guilty of a crime still have the arrests on their record. This proposal would automatically expunge the criminal records of anyone found not guilty of a crime, so that no Floridian is deprived of their rights except through due process.

HB 1311 / SB 1126 - Licensure of Check Cashers and Foreign Currency Exchangers - Rep. McClure / Sen. Brandes

While some laws and regulations at least intend to address real potential harms to others, others introduce unnecessary and arbitrary requirements. Unfortunately, a lot of government red tape is arbitrary, reduces the number of employment opportunities available to citizens and diminishes the value created by market competition. This bill would increase the dollar threshold--from \$2,500 to \$7,500--before licensing requirements begin to kick in, meaning fewer barriers to employment and increased access to these services.

HB 1363 / SB 980 – Publicly Funded Retirement Programs – Rep. McClure / Sen. Brandes

Like all workers, Florida's state employees deserve to receive the benefits they were promised in exchange for their work. This is especially true for those who work their entire careers with those expectations. But in order to fulfill the financial promises made to state employees, legislators must first have an accurate sense of how these promises will affect the state's budgeting process, now and in the future. This proposal serves both of those needs by making sure that pre-retirement and post-retirement benefits, such as life insurance, health savings accounts, and continuing education credits are included in regularly-scheduled actuarial reports.

SB 1776 - Vegetable Gardens - Sen. Bradley

Whenever government limits someone's ability to use their property for its highest and most valued uses, it restricts everyone's property rights and restricts freedom. This proposal protects the Floridians' property rights by preempting any ordinance or regulation regulating vegetable gardens on residential properties but does not preclude local ordinances or regulations that might be affected by the incidental effects of vegetable gardening.

HB 5101 - Educational Freedom - Rep. Diaz

This proposal brings several proposals forward that will introduce greater flexibility and freedom to Florida's education system, including making the Principal Autonomy Pilot Program permanent and increasing the number of schools that can benefit from greater administrative flexibility. In addition, this legislation allows Schools of Hope to carry forward funds not disbursed by the year allocated for up to five years.

HB 6005 / SB 778 - Sports Development - Rep. Avila / Sen. Lee (T)

This bill would eliminate Florida's Sports Development program, which serves as a potential avenue for corporate welfare for professional sports teams. While particular program has not yet been used, taxpayers should not be on the hook for the tens of millions this program could someday vacuum from their wallets, especially when it would be used to financially prop up sports teams worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

HB 6037 / SB 198 - Deregulation of Fireworks – Rep. Grant (J) / Sen. Steube

This bill would eliminate the required legal registration on manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers of sparklers. This bill would eliminate some of the red-tape surrounding the production of supplies often used in local celebrations and remove one more government obstacle to free expression.

HB 7001 / SB 1742 - Supermajority Vote for State Taxes or Fees - Rep. Leek / Sen. Stargel

The authority of any government to tax its citizens should never be taken lightly. This is especially true when just 51 can vote to increase taxes on the other 49, with a simple majority. This joint resolution proposes an amendment to the state Constitution that would increase the vote burden needed in the legislature to impose, authorize or raise taxes or fees. If passed, a new or increased tax or fee would require supermajority votes of two-thirds of the membership of each house of the legislature.

Support Bills

HB 7055 - House Education Package - Rep. Bileca

This proposal brings several proposals forward that will introduce greater flexibility and freedom for teachers and students in Florida's education system. One such change includes making the Principal Autonomy Pilot Program permanent and increasing the number of schools that can benefit from greater administrative flexibility. Another component is the introduction of accountability and transparency requirements for the exclusive collective bargaining units, requiring re-certification of a units in which less than 50% are dues-paying members. And finally, this legislation creates the Hope Scholarship, a school choice program which will benefit the student victims of bullying and harassment across Florida.

HB 7071 / SB 1218 - Criminal Justice Data Transparency - Rep. Sprowls / Sen. Brandes

This bill systematizes the collection and reporting of accurate and valid criminal justice data, substantively adding to the transparency and accountability of this important government function. By making Florida's criminal justice data transparent and available, the Sunshine State can affirm its commitment to rule of law, a crucial part of maintaining a free society. In addition, by developing more sophisticated data-collection capabilities, Florida's criminal justice system can become a national leader for accountable stewardship of taxpayers' resources.

HB 7087 - House Tax Package - Rep. Renner

The proposed tax package consists of cuts to several tax burdens imposed on Floridians and would allow additional opportunities for students to participate in Florida's educational choice programs through a sales tax credit. Currently, more than 10,000 students with special needs benefit from the Gardiner Scholarship, and more than 100,000 students from low-income households benefit from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. Through a sales tax credit, this proposed committee bill offers assurance of Florida's commitment to the educational options afforded to every taxpayer. Additionally, Florida is the only state in America that levies a sales tax on commercial leases. After taking steps to chip away at this burden last year, this bill adds to that momentum by trimming the rate of this uncompetitive tax from 5.8% to 5.5%.

Oppose Bills

HB 49 / SB 318 - Internship Tax Credit Program - Rep. Jones /S Sen. Powell

Following its filing last year, this bill would create a \$2,000 tax credit given to employers who end up hiring interns who graduated from public colleges and universities in Florida. While new graduates sometimes struggle to find gainful employment, this would create a new special interest group, including not just almost exclusively younger Floridians but the employers who are first to rush to the front of the line.

SB 114 - Small Business Contracting - Sen. Campbell

While there is great value in the contributions of Florida's small businesses, tax dollars should only seek the best bang-for-the-taxpayers'-buck and should not discriminate between service providers on the basis of size. This bill would create a quota, requiring that a certain percentage of state contracts be offered to those defined as small businesses.

SB 216 - Schools of Hope Red-Tape - Sen. Book

Just one session after its passage, this bill would introduce new restrictions on the the Schools of Hope program. Rather than complying with the spirit of the Schools of Hope program's revolving loan program requirement that projects primarily serve students from within an area of persistently low performing schools, this bill would place an unrealistically high quota which would require 75% of the students in a Schools of Hope recipient school to be from the low performing school. Rather than ensure that those students who are most in need of options have them, this bill would cut the possibility of qualifying off at the knees by restricting the in-flow of students from outside the district--a problem that persistently low performing school districts should want to have.

SB 302 - Prohibition of Public ACA Waivers - Sen. Rodriguez

One of the hallmarks of a free and open economy is the ability to 'vote' with your dollars to pay for things you want and to abstain from paying for things that you do not. This bill would prohibit public employees from being issued waivers from mandated coverage requirements under ACA, requiring them to not only pay for insurance coverage they might not need, want, or may have an objection to paying to provide. Whatever the reason, Floridians should not be required to purchase something by public officials.

HB 341 / SB 1606 – Film Incentives – Rep. Silvers / Sen. Taddeo

Glamorous industries often command the most attention in receiving corporate welfare. This bill would create a new film and television incentive program in Florida, called the Florida Motion Picture Capital Corporation. Governed by a board made up of industry insiders, this program would disburse tax dollars in exchange for the promise of jobs and economic development. The fact is, not only is this an improper role for government to play, but it is an inefficient, wasteful use of tax dollars. While Florida's film and television industries are important contributors to the state's success, this is not the best way to support the sustainability of the industry. It would be preferable to enact broad-based tax-cuts that can continue to make Florida a great place to do business long after the next Hollywood blockbuster has come and gone.

HB 403 / SB 440 - Florida Veterans Care - Rep. Avila / Sen. Garcia

For the tens of millions of men and women who have served in our nation's armed forces, using the healthcare benefits promised to them has often meant having to deal with months-long wait times, long commutes, or even subpar quality. This bill would seek to provide veterans with another alternative for their health care, using federal funds to create a program similar to Medicaid managed care. While the intentions to alleviate the problems of government-provided healthcare are noble, this legislation would only add another layer of bureaucracy for veterans to wade through. Unfortunately, Medicaid provides low-quality care, and what Florida's veterans deserve are better, private options.

HB 561 / SB 758 - Diabetes Educators Licensing - Rep. Plasencia / Sen. Gibson

This bill would introduce a new set of licensing requirements for diabetes educators. This requires navigating myriad complex requirements which require years of commitment, but still do not guarantee any more competence than those in related disciplines. Unfortunately, this proposal would serve to fence off more and more licensing territory, restricting access to consumers who are already protected by laws dealing with fraud.

SB 586 - Minimum Teacher Salaries - Sen. Rader

Whenever governments engage in price controls, like by mandating a minimum wage, there are always adverse and unintended consequences. This bill would create the “Florida Teacher Fair Pay Act”, setting the minimum salary for Florida teachers at \$50,000, not only by limiting the options available to younger, less-experienced teachers in order to pay for it. But by reducing the relative incentives that come when incomes are more closely linked to performance, like exists in every other private industry.

Oppose Bills

HB 741 / SB 1868 - Professional Geology Regulation - Rep. Goodson / Sen. Broxson

This bill would further carve out an expansion of the definition of professional geology for the purposes of the licensing board, as well as introduce a few explicit exclusions from the definition. The bill also expands the fees the licensing board can charge biennially or for renewal, with little rationale or justification.

HB 809 / SB 236 – Tax Credit for Baby-Changing Tables – Rep. Duran / Sen. Book

One of the key principles of sound tax policy is neutrality with respect to the more day-to-day decisions of citizens and businesses. This bill, while perhaps well-intentioned, would serve very concentrated special interests within the hospitality industry, creating a tax credit worth up to \$300 for the purchase of a baby changing tables. Instead of devoting an estimated \$3.5m in narrowly-tailored tax credits to benefit an industry that is already adapting to meet the needs of consumers, it would better serve all of Florida's taxpayers if the revenue from this and other special interest exemptions were instead used to offer broad-based tax relief for all.

HJR 911 / SJR 1136 – Medicaid Expansion Amendment – Rep. Berman / Sen. Taddeo

This resolution would bring expansion of Medicaid up for a referendum. But Florida residents deserve better than Medicaid has to offer. Medicaid is a clear example of the axiom, "coverage is not care." Physicians more and more reluctant to deal with the paperwork and the long wait to receive payment, and Medicaid patients suffer long wait times. There is evidence it actually leads to worse health outcomes than being uninsured. Florida should redirect its attention to removing the giant state barriers that are explicitly designed to limit competition, like eliminating certificates of need and freeing physicians using direct primary care models to bring down the price of care.

HB 925 / SB 1266 – Charter Financial Disclosure – Rep. Newton / Sen. Thurston

This bill would provide financial disclosure requirements for charter school employees, including: owner, president, chairperson of the governing board of directors, superintendent or governing board member employed by a charter school system that operates in two or fewer districts. This presents privacy concerns for private citizens and creates a double-standard in public contracting where one set of rules exists for charters than exists for anyone other private citizen. There are other, less intrusive ways to achieve accountability.

HB 1083 / SB 638 - Nurse Staffing Minimums – Rep. Watson (B) / Sen. Campbell

This bill would impose minimum staffing ratios of registered nurses to patients, under a wide variety of circumstances. While the stated intent is to "retain sufficient nursing staff so as to promote optimal health care outcomes," every health provider's circumstances are different, and providers should not be pigeonholed. Aside from the chances of altering the makeup of a healthcare facility's staff for the worse in order to comply with the new requirements, there is evidence from several studies that these kinds of laws simply are not effective.

HB 1219 / SB 1076 - Restrictions on Franchises - Rep. Fitzenhagen / Sen. Steube

The right to freely and voluntarily contract is vitally important in any marketplace. Putting restrictions on these rights increases the risks and costs of doing business, reducing opportunities for many entrepreneurial Floridians. One such business model available for entrepreneurs is the franchise model. While the stated intention of this legislation is to protect franchisees from losing their investment on the whims of a franchisor, this bill infringes on the rights of buyers and sellers to freely negotiate the terms of their contracts by imposing new limits on franchisors and restricting what they can require of franchisees. Not only will this drive up the costs of doing business in Florida, but it will limit opportunities for many Floridians to even take part in this business model as a franchisee.

HB 1273 / SB 1718 - Prescription Coverage Mandate - Rep. Raschein / Sen. Book

This bill would revive a mandate that would require the vast majority of Floridians to pay for insurance coverage that includes coverage contraceptives, while excluding religious organizations and certain "closely held for-profits" which decide to opt out. In light of several Supreme Court decisions relating to the mandate, while it is notable that the sponsors recognize the importance of conscience for those with objections to paying for such coverage, it should not matter who objects to being forced to purchase something on behalf of someone else--for any reason. Floridians' options should not be limited in order to force them to buy something.

HB 1441 / SB 166 – Minimum Wage – Rep. Jacquet / Sen. Rodriguez (J)

This bill would gradually introduce a \$7 increase the state's minimum wage between now and 2023, increasing with inflation after that. While it is true that some Floridians would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage, many others would suddenly be crowded out of employment together, as many jobs would become too costly for businesses to justify hiring to fill. A much better alternative is to reduce the many regulatory barriers preventing Floridians from putting their skills to meaningful work.

Oppose Bills

HB 6039 / SB 1014 – Removal of Preemption on Local Plastic Bag Regulation – Rep. Richardson / Sen. Stewart

This bill would eliminate the state's preemption of any rule, regulation or ordinance putting limits on or restricting the use of plastic bags. While there are valid concerns about the effects of plastic bags on Florida beaches, the solution is not to place additional burdens on businesses and consumers.

HB 6047 - Charter School Capital Outlay - Rep. Newton

This bill would effectively eliminate charter schools from receiving capital outlay funding by eliminating their reference in statutes dealing with capital outlay. Students in charter schools have historically received much lower funding than their traditional public school counterparts. This would exacerbate the issue, setting interests in parity aside and ignoring choices of many of Florida's families for the education of their children.