



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

The Majority Office created the below articles as content for your newsletters. The Majority Office also created the following video that highlights the “Top 5” things that happened in the House throughout the week: https://youtu.be/Jvk_Hx9rnYc

IMPORTANT NOTE: All communications distributed in mass, including in electronic format, require review and approval *prior to distribution*. The articles included below have been preapproved. However, please remember that you still need approval from the Majority Office before distributing an article if you change it or if you include it with other unapproved material. Refer to chapter 4 of the Administrative Policy Manual for more information on the House mass communications policy.

House Subcommittee Passes Robust Economic Development Reform

The Careers & Competition Subcommittee passed a bill this week that seeks to fundamentally change our state’s economic development policies.

Currently, the state has a mass of programs and offices devoted to offering taxpayer dollars to certain qualified businesses to incentivize them to create jobs. Most businesses that receive such incentives have over 1,000 employees. The bill eliminates over 20 of these programs and offices to allow lawmakers to focus more state resources on implementing policies that help all businesses, like lowering taxes, cutting burdensome regulations, and making smart investments in education and infrastructure.

The bill eliminates Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI), and VISIT Florida, both of which have serious problems. First, I find them to both be deeply misguided. EFI—the state’s principal economic development organization—administers most of the incentive programs mentioned above. These programs pick winners and losers in the marketplace, which I believe is an improper role for government. This is further complicated by the fact that EFI programs pick their winners poorly. EFI does not break even on the investments it makes in a vast majority of its programs.

VISIT Florida—the state’s official tourism marketing corporation—uses taxpayer dollars to offer a redundant service. Private tourist destinations like Disney and Universal will market themselves regardless of VISIT Florida. Moreover, numerous local government and private economic development organizations throughout the state do the same work as VISIT Florida.

Second, both have demonstrated a track record of using very poor judgement with taxpayer dollars. Both organizations have engaged in numerous deals that cost taxpayers millions for almost nothing in return. Google searches about their dealings with Digital Domain, Sanford Burnham, Pitbull, and Brand USA tell the story.

I am proud to support this good bill because I believe taxpayers know how to spend their money far better than the government does, because economic success is best governed by the free market, and because now is the time to focus on policies that will benefit *all* Floridians.



House Subcommittee Receives Briefing on School Accountability

On Wednesday, the PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee received an overview of Florida's School Accountability System from the Florida Department of Education (DOE).

For decades, Florida has used standards and assessments that have contributed to increasing levels of achievement by our students and schools. Florida's standards are unique to our state and designed to prepare students for success in higher education and the workforce.

DOE issues both schools and districts letter grades based on student performance on the annual statewide standardized assessment. I learned from the presentation that 46% of all schools graded in 2015-2016 received an "A" or "B" and that 57% of schools graded either "D" or "F" in 2014-2015 improved their grade in 2015-2016. DOE awarded 38 out of 67 school districts with an "A" or "B." No districts received an "F" and only two received a "D."

These are encouraging statistics that lead me to believe that Florida's school accountability system is working. I look forward to supporting any measure that will improve these numbers to further ensure that all children in Florida receive a high quality education.

Subcommittee Hears Presentation on Problems with Community Redevelopment Agencies

This week, the Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee heard a presentation by the Florida Auditor General's office on Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs). CRAs are special districts created by cities or counties to address slum, blight, or a shortage of affordable housing in specific areas through redevelopment of affected properties. To pay for the redevelopment the county or municipality establishes a trust fund that is funded by a portion of ad valorem taxes.

The Auditor General's office discussed a 2014 report in which it found that many CRAs lack proper oversight and use taxpayer dollars for activities unrelated to improving slum, blight, or affordable housing conditions. The Auditor General's office had several recommendations to improve CRAs, but I am concerned that CRAs may be unable to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

I find the current lack of transparency and accountability associated with CRAs unacceptable. I think we must consider all available options to fix this problem and ensure taxpayer dollars are protected.

Subcommittee Works to Bring Uniformity to Regulation of Transportation Network Companies

On Wednesday, the Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee passed HB 221, which establishes a regulatory framework for transportation network companies (TNCs), like Uber and Lyft, and preempts TNC regulation to the state. This means that TNC companies only have to worry about state laws and regulations relating to the operation of their businesses. Currently, TNCs in Florida have to follow local laws and regulations, which change from city to city. Some cities have even tried to ban the operation of TNCs.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

HB 221 would implement numerous TNC regulations, including but not limited to: minimum insurance requirements for drivers and TNCs; a zero tolerance policy on drug and alcohol abuse by TNC drivers; extensive background and driving history checks; nondiscrimination and disability access compliance; and requirements to maintain records on riders and TNC drivers.

Local governments should not keep TNCs from operating successfully in Florida. TNCs are efficient, safe, convenient, and most importantly, they provide flexible jobs. I look forward to working hard to ensure HB 221 becomes law.

House Committee Votes to Repeal Red Light Cameras

On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Committee passed HB 6007 to remove the authorization for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and local governments to install and maintain traffic infraction detectors, or “red light cameras.” The committee’s decision follows a previous review of the 2015-2016 Red Light Camera Summary Report by the Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee, which shows an *increase* in total crashes and injuries at intersections with red light cameras.

In my opinion, HB 6007 is great news for Floridians, and I hope it becomes law. Although red light cameras may have good intentions, the data shows they simply do not work. I will keep you updated as the bill moves through the committee process.

Civil Justice Subcommittee Advances Government Accountability Initiatives

This week, the Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee passed two important bills, which both promote greater government accountability: HJR 1, regarding judicial term limits; and HB 301, regarding Florida Supreme Court reporting requirements.

HJR 1 proposes to place on the next general election ballot an amendment to the Florida constitution that would provide term limits for state appellate-level judges.

Specifically, these judges would be restricted from appearing on a ballot for retention if they have served consecutive 12 years in the same office. If approved by the voters, these new term limits will apply to judges currently in office, but does not include time served in office prior to January 9, 2019.

HB 301 requires the Florida Supreme Court to provide an annual report by October 15 of each year listing its cases without a decision or disposition beyond a 180 day period. The report must include the case name, number and type, and the reason for the delay in rendering a decision, among other requirements. The report must be delivered to the Governor, Attorney General, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

I think that both bills bring needed accountability. Imposing term limits will reinforce the important principle that judicial service, like all public service, is about the citizenry, the institution, and rule of law, *not* about the individual. Creating the new reporting requirement for the Supreme Court will allow the



public to determine whether any deficiencies exist in the court's functioning and indicate to lawmakers whether there is a need for reform.

I look forward to continuing to support these and other accountability measures for all three branches of government.

Subcommittee Discusses Direct Primary Care and Drug Price Transparency

This week, the Health Innovation Subcommittee hosted a panel discussion on direct primary care (DPC) and received a presentation on drug price transparency: two things I hope we can further promote and strengthen in our state to empower patients and increase access to affordable care.

DPC is a medical practice model that eliminates third party payers from the doctor-patient relationship. By contract, a patient or employer pays a monthly fee to the primary care provider for defined services. After paying the fee, a patient can utilize all services under the agreement at no extra charge.

The panel of five experts in the subcommittee offered compelling testimony about the benefits of DPC, including lower costs for patients and employers and improved care. The panel also addressed ways we can make DPC more widely used, including making the law clear that DPC is not insurance.

The Agency for Health Care Administration and Office of the Attorney General gave a presentation on MyFloridaRx.com, which is Florida's prescription drug pricing website. The website includes 150 of the most commonly prescribed brand name drugs and associated generic equivalents and allows patients to compare prices of the drugs by location. You can search on the website by county, city, and drug.

The presentation touched on the website's current limitations, which includes only providing information on 150 drugs. I look forward to supporting legislation that increases that number. I believe the more robust we can make MyFloridaRx.com, the better. Ultimately, drug transparency empowers patients and lowers the costs of drugs by creating competition.

Subcommittee Receives Presentations on Healthcare Workforce Issues and Telehealth

The Health Quality Subcommittee heard presentations on Thursday about healthcare workforce issues and telehealth.

The subcommittee learned that despite the fast growth of certain healthcare occupations, like registered nurses and nursing assistants, the supply of physicians and nurses is not meeting the demand. Fortunately, we can help mitigate the shortage by eliminating valueless regulations that prevent health care practitioners from providing care to the greatest extent of their education and training.

I believe we can also address the workforce shortage by advancing and supporting telehealth. Telehealth is the use of telecommunications technologies, like computers or mobile devices, to deliver health-related services and information remotely to improve access to care. Telehealth is currently used throughout the state, but as the subcommittee learned there are several barriers to its use for facilities,



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

health care professionals, and health plans. Some of these barriers include financial concerns, lack of physician interest, government regulation, and concerns with liability.

I think it is essential that we look for ways to knock down some of these barriers to expand telehealth. I believe that by expanding telehealth we can help address shortage issues and increase access to affordable and quality healthcare.