



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://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ja617W8Zul&feature=youtu.be>.

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 Passes Economic Development Reform Bills

During the first week of session, the Florida House passed two bills that fundamentally change our state’s approach to economic development.

The House passed HB 7005, which eliminates Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI), a seriously troubled public-private partnership tasked with the state’s economic development efforts. The bill also eliminates over 20 programs and offices offering taxpayer dollars to certain businesses to incentivize them to create jobs. As we learned throughout interim committee weeks, these poor performing economic development programs and offices reward a select few at the expense of many, and I believe that is wrong. Eliminating EFI, along with these 20 plus programs and offices will 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 House also passed HB 9, which transforms VISIT Florida, the state’s official tourism marketing corporation, to require transparency and accountability. Some of the much needed accountability and transparency reforms the bill brings to VISIT Florida include the following: requiring VISIT Florida contracts to contain performance standards; prohibiting VISIT Florida employees or board members from improperly receiving gifts paid for by VISIT Florida funds or funds from a local tourist or economic development agency; requiring VISIT Florida to post all contracts on the CFO Transparency website; requiring VISIT Florida to submit a detailed operating budget to the Legislature each year; and requiring Senate confirmation of the VISIT Florida President/CEO. In short, the bill ensures VISIT Florida’s track record of using very poor judgement with taxpayer dollars comes to an end.

I proudly supported these two bills 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.

Florida House Passes Tough Lobbying Bans

The Florida House passed a bill on Friday that would extend the current ban on post-service lobbying from two years to six years. The ban prevents legislators and state officers from personally representing a person or entity for compensation before any state agency or state government body. This new six-year ban would be the first of its kind and the strictest ban in the country.



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In my view, extending the timeframe of the lobbying ban will help eliminate any actual and perceived revolving door of elected officials profiting off their time in public office. I believe holding public office is a sacred trust and I was proud to support this bill with my colleagues.

Dr. Martin “Marty” Makary Speaks to Legislators

Dr. Marty Makary is a surgeon at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a professor of Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. His research has focused on measuring quality in health care, improved outcomes, medical errors, and unnecessary tests and treatments. He was the creator of the original Surgical Checklist later popularized in the book The Checklist Manifesto.

He wrote Unaccountable, a book about doctor-led efforts to make health care better for patients, and Mama Maggie about the inspiring work of a Nobel Prize nominee in the Middle East. He has also written for The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, and TIME Magazine.

Last year, Dr. Makary was named one of America’s 20 Most Influential People in Health Care by Health Leaders Magazine.

It was a privilege to hear Dr. Makary speak, and I look forward to exploring ways to implement some of his ideas into the state’s health care policies.

Subcommittee Passes Three Free Market Health Care Reforms

This week--the first week of the 2017 legislative session--the Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee passed three important free market health care reforms.

First, the subcommittee passed HB 7, which eliminates the Certificate of Need (CON) program in Florida. The CON program requires certain health care providers to get permission from the state before entering the health care marketplace. The CON program limits innovation and access in the health care marketplace and increases health care costs for Floridians.

Second, the subcommittee passed HB 145, which expands the use of ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) and allows recovery care centers (RCCs) in the state. ASCs are non-hospital facilities that provide surgical care. ASCs have highly skilled staff and surgeons and are less expensive and more convenient than having surgery in a hospital. RCCs provide post-surgical and post-diagnostic, short-term medical and nursing care, support, and pain control for patients that do not require hospitalization. RCCs exist in some states, but not Florida.

Third, the subcommittee passed HB 375, which requires all Florida hospitals and ASCs to complete and publish patient culture surveys. A “patient safety culture survey” is a survey conducted by a health care facility which asks employees about patient safety and quality of care. The surveys help hospitals



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identify and fix problems. If published, the survey data can also help Floridians make decisions about which facilities are best for their own care and that of their families.

All three of these bills are aimed at increasing access to quality and affordable health care for all Floridians. I support all three of these bills and will encourage my colleagues to support them also.

House Subcommittee Votes to Hold Public Employee Unions Accountable

The House Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee passed HB 11, which reforms the yearly public employee union recertification process to increase transparency and accountability. HB 11 requires public employee unions to be transparent by reporting in their annual registration renewal application the number of employees eligible to be in the union and the number of employees who do and do not pay dues to the union. If 50 percent or more of eligible union members do not pay dues, the union must reapply for certification. The certification of a union that does not comply with these requirements is revoked. Unions that represent law enforcement officers, firefighters, and corrections officers are *not included* in these changes, except for the reporting requirement.

HB 11 is a positive step in increasing transparency and holding public employee unions accountable to the workers they represent. I will keep you informed as this bill moves through the legislative process.

Subcommittee Votes to Reform Community Redevelopment Agencies

On Wednesday, the House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee passed HB 13 to reform community redevelopment agencies (CRAs). CRAs are created by cities or counties to address slum, blight or affordable housing shortages through redevelopment. The subcommittee found that some CRAs use taxpayer dollars for improper purposes and that all CRAs need better reporting and oversight. The subcommittee also found that cities and counties can already perform the same functions as CRAs.

HB 13 seeks to fix these problems by increasing transparency and accountability for CRAs. It would require board members to receive ethics training, require the Department of Economic Opportunity to post a list of inactive CRAs online, and require more oversight of each CRA's budget process. In addition, the bill would phase-out existing CRAs and prevent cities and counties from creating new CRAs.

Any government program that uses taxpayer money should be held to the highest standards. I support this bill because I believe too many CRAs do not live up to such standards.

House Resolution to Support Israel Passes Committee

This week, the House Government Accountability Committee approved House Resolution (HR) 281, which shows our support for Israel. HR 281 shares the Florida House's objections to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, which states Israel's settlement activity is a violation of international law. Specifically, HR 281 voices our opposition to this position and asks the United Nations to either repeal or change its action regarding Israel. Numerous advocates of Israel provided compelling testimony in support of HR 281 and the importance of the United States' support of Israel.



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I strongly support HR 281 and believe Florida and the United States should stand with Israel.

Committee Passes Bills Focused on Local Government Fiscal Transparency and Responsibility

This week, the Ways & Means Committee passed two bills that would increase local government fiscal transparency and responsibility.

One bill focuses on helping citizens gain access to important information so they can be more engaged on important government decisions. Some of the bill's provisions include: easing access to voting records related to local option taxes and debt issuances; easing access to tax history and property tax information; and expanding public notice requirements.

The other bill would help ensure local governments use taxpayer dollars responsibly. For example, in certain cases the bill would prohibit property tax increases and prohibit local governments from enacting, extending or increasing local option taxes.

I support the solutions provided in these bills because Floridians deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent.

House Subcommittee Tackles Professional Deregulation

The Careers & Competition Subcommittee passed a comprehensive bill this week seeking to deregulate certain professions. The goal of the bill is to provide more job opportunities for Floridians while protecting their health and safety.

The bill would remove certain professions and entities from regulation by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, reduce the hours of training required to obtain certain licenses, and eliminate the requirement that certain licensees obtain a certificate of authorization for their businesses, as well as other changes.

There are numerous professions effected by the bill, including: interior designers; hair braiders; hair wrappers; body wrappers; boxing announcers; boxing timekeepers; labor organizations and business agents; talent agencies; auctioneers; barbers; restricted barbers; nail specialists; facial specialists; full specialists; asbestos abatement consultants and contractors; architects; landscape architects; geologists; and yacht and ship brokers.

I fully support professional deregulation because it is a key component in allowing businesses to grow more easily, creating more job opportunities for Floridians. As this issue develops, I look forward to keeping you informed.



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Commerce Committee Protects Florida Property Owners

This week, the Commerce Committee passed a bill that seeks to protect Florida property owners by limiting property tax assessments on non-homestead properties. HJR 21 is a proposed constitutional amendment that would **permanently** retain the current 10 percent cap on annual non-homestead assessments approved by voters in 2008. This effort is necessary to avoid a substantial tax increase for Floridians. I look forward to supporting this proposal and any legislation that protects property owners from excessive taxes.

House Passes Two Important Bills Related to Our Court System

The House passed two important bills this week related to our court system: HB 301 and SB 280.

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, 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. 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.

SB 280 will restore Florida's death penalty law, which has been left in a state of uncertainty until we make the changes to law that the Florida Supreme Court held were required by the Florida Constitution. The updated law will require that a jury be unanimous in their recommendation to impose the death penalty. I believe the death penalty remains a significant deterrent of crime, and I am glad we are getting the process back on track.

House Committee Approves Local Government Ethics Reform

The Appropriations Committee passed a bill this week to reform ethics guidelines for local governments. Some of the provisions of the bill include the following: requiring certain elected local officers to file a more detailed financial disclosure; expanding annual ethics training requirements for local officers; expanding restrictions when a conflict of interest exists; and requiring lobbyists to register with a statewide database before they can lobby local government bodies.

I support these actions to improve ethics on the state-level, and I'm happy to support these reforms to improve accountability and transparency at the local level. Public office is a public trust, and the Florida House is committed to passing legislation in support of this.

House Committee Workshops More Ethics Reforms

On Thursday, the House Public Integrity and Ethics Committee met to discuss new ethics reforms. Some of the reforms discussed included prohibitions on state and local officers or employees from soliciting a conflicting job; requiring disclosure and reporting of offers of conflicting employment; clarifying



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regulatory conflict exceptions; and imposing a two-year ban on lobbying any state agency for Department Secretaries and a small number of other top appointees in the Executive Branch.

In the coming weeks, the committee will determine which of these reforms should be included in new ethics reform legislation. In my opinion, it is essential for government employees and officers to be held accountable to the people and I look forward to reviewing the future legislation.

PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee Passes Educational Options Bill

The PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee passed HB 15, which looks to expand and improve the Gardiner Scholarship Program, the John McKay Scholarship Program, and the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

The Gardiner Scholarship Program provides parents of students with certain disabilities more flexibility to customize their child's education. The bill would expand eligibility for the Gardiner scholarship by increasing the pool of eligible applicants and expanding the authorized uses of funds.

The John McKay Scholarship Program provides scholarships for students with disabilities to attend a public or private school of their choice. The bill would expand eligibility for the McKay Scholarship Program by allowing students to apply for the scholarship after spending one term in public school instead of an entire year.

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program offers scholarships to students from families with limited financial resources. The bill would increase the amount of scholarship funds students receive on a grade by grade basis and increase the amount of transportation funds for students who attend a public school outside of their district. The bill would also allow parents who are in the armed forces to apply for the scholarship at any time.

I believe we are responsible for ensuring all children have access to a high-quality education. HB 15 helps us fulfill that responsibility by increasing educational choice and opportunity for children that need it the most.

House Subcommittee Votes to Expand Civics Education

The PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee passed a bill this week that would strengthen civics education in our K-12 public schools and post-secondary institutions.

The bill proposes three primary changes to law. First, the bill would designate September as "American Founders' Month," and encourage all public schools to coordinate instruction related to the nation's founding fathers. Second, the bill would require the Just Read, Florida! Office to develop and provide access to sequenced, content-rich curriculum programming, instructional practices, and resources that help elementary students increase their background knowledge and literacy skills. Finally, the bill would require students entering into the Florida College System or State University System in the 2018-2019 school year, or later, to either take a civics course or pass a civic competency test.



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If it becomes law, this legislation will help students become civically engaged adults who make positive contributions to their communities.

Best & Brightest Programs Clear First Committee

This week, the House Education Committee passed a bill that would help attract and retain the best teachers and principals in schools throughout our state.

The bill would expand the Best & Brightest Teachers Program. Under the current program, teachers who scored in the 80th percentile or higher on the ACT or SAT, at the time they took the exam, are eligible for a bonus of up to \$10,000 if they are rated as “highly-effective” by teacher evaluations. The bill would expand this good program by revising the eligibility standards. For example, one proposed change is to recognize other national, standardized assessments including the LSAT, GRE, GMAT, and the MCAT.

The bill would also create the Best & Brightest Principals Program. This program would provide a financial reward and increased autonomy over personnel and budget decisions to principals that have been with their school for at least two years and have a high number of Best & Brightest teachers.

I support both programs because attracting and retaining the best teachers and principals is essential to our students’ success.