



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/xzDtEZRC8Xw>

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House Committee Votes to Extend Post-Service Lobbying Bans

The Rules Committee passed a bill on Tuesday that would extend the current ban on post-service lobbying from two years to six years. As amended by the committee, the ban prevents legislators and statewide elected officers from personally representing a person or entity for compensation before any state agency or state government body, including the Legislature.

The committee also passed a joint resolution, which would propose an amendment to Florida’s Constitution that would apply the same extension of the post-service lobbying ban from two to six years. If the resolution passes both houses of the Legislature by a three-fifths vote, then the proposed constitutional amendment would appear on the 2018 ballot, where it would require 60% voter approval for passage.

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 the committee’s actions correctly recognize that holding public office is a sacred trust, and I look forward to supporting both measures at their next stop on the floor of the House of Representatives.

House Works to Create Uniform Rules for Ridesharing Companies

On Tuesday, the House Government Accountability Committee passed HB 221, which establishes a regulatory framework for ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft and preempts regulation to the state. This means that ridesharing companies would only have to worry about state laws and regulations relating to the operation of their businesses. Currently, ridesharing companies in Florida have to follow local laws and regulations, which change from city to city. Some cities have even tried to ban their operation.

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

Local governments should not keep ridesharing companies from operating successfully in Florida. Ridesharing companies are efficient, safe, convenient, and most importantly, provide flexible jobs. I look



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forward to working hard to ensure HB 221 becomes law. The next stop for HB 221 is the House floor, where all members of the Florida House of Representatives will vote on the bill.

House Committee Votes to Repeal Red Light Cameras

The House Government Accountability Committee passed HB 6007 this week to repeal the authorization for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and local governments to install and maintain red light cameras. The committee's decision follows a previous review by the Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee of the 2015-2016 Red Light Camera Summary Report, 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.

The next stop for HB 6007 is the House floor, where all members of the Florida House of Representatives will vote on the bill.

House Reauthorizes the Florida National Guard Foundation & Florida Veterans Foundation

On Wednesday, the House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee passed two bills to reauthorize both the Florida National Guard Foundation and the Florida Veterans Foundation. The Florida National Guard Foundation funds and administers emergency financial assistance and scholarship programs to current members of the National Guard as well as their families. The Florida Veterans Foundation provides similar benefits and assistance to Florida's veterans and their families as well as partnering with all levels of government in order to improve the wellbeing of veterans.

The authorization for the foundations is subject to sunset rules, which means the foundations must be reviewed and reauthorized to continue. I strongly believe that Florida's government should continue to work towards making Florida the most military and veteran friendly state and continuing both of these foundations advances that mission.

House Resolution to Support Israel Passes Subcommittee

This week, the House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee 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.

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



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House Committee Votes on Legislation to Hold Government Accountable

On Thursday, the House Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee unanimously passed HB 479, which increases transparency and accountability in government. The bill holds government accountable by ensuring state agencies and many other government entities have internal controls in place to curb waste, fraud, and abuse and promote efficiency in their operations. In addition, the bill increases transparency by extending the amount of time budget documents for cities and counties must be available online so citizens know how their tax dollars are being spent. Finally, the bill reforms public testimony laws so people will have the opportunity to speak at local board and commission meetings without having to submit their comments in advance.

I support this bill and pledge to continue looking for ways to make government more transparent, efficient, and accountable to taxpayers.

Ways & Means Committee Focuses on Floridians

The Ways & Means Committee made the most of their final interim committee week, passing HJR 21, which limits property tax assessments on non-homestead properties, and tackling concepts related to local government fiscal responsibility.

The committee began its meeting by passing HJR 21, which is a proposed constitutional amendment that would **permanently** retain the current 10% cap on annual non-homestead assessments approved by voters in 2008. In my view, 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 tax burdens.

The committee then focused on solutions that will help ensure local governments responsibly use taxpayer dollars. During the discussion, the following four ideas were highlighted: 1) prohibiting property tax increases where local governments have unencumbered fund balances; 2) prohibiting local governments from enacting, extending or increasing local option taxes unless they have not increased property taxes in the last three years; 3) having local option taxes approved by voters only at general elections with a 60% voter approval; and 4) having any new debt that exceeds five years in length be approved only at general elections with 60% voter approval.

I think these ideas are worth exploring further as they make their way into bill form, and I look forward to supporting them. I believe all Floridians deserve responsible government at all levels –local, state, and federal – when their tax dollars are at play. As this issue develops, I will make sure to keep you informed.



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House Committee Passes Bold Economic Development Reform

The Appropriations Committee 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 also eliminates Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI), a seriously troubled public-private partnership tasked with the state's economic development efforts. EFI 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.

Finally, the bill transforms VISIT Florida, the state's official tourism marketing corporation, to require transparency and accountability. Some of the 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 food, beverages, lodging, entertainment or 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 am proud to support this 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 Advance Local Regulation Preemption Bill

This week, the Careers & Competition Subcommittee approved an important bill relating to local regulation preemption.

HB 17 will prohibit local governments from imposing regulations on businesses, professions and occupations that are outside of what is set in statute. The bill does not prohibit local governments from continuing in certain practices such as levying local business taxes, zoning, land ordinances, or special assessments to name a few.

The bill, which is a key component to the House's approach toward economic development, will result in creating a far less burdensome and more uniform regulatory environment. This will allow businesses to



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grow and thrive throughout our entire state and give more Floridians an opportunity to get a job, which is the ultimate goal.

Tourism & Gaming Control Subcommittee Passes Gambling Control Bill

The Tourism & Gaming Control Subcommittee passed a bill this week that seeks to approve a 2017 Gaming Compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida and tackles issues related to pari-mutuel wagering, cardroom gambling, slot machine gambling, and other gambling.

The bill will create a new 20 year compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. State revenues from the compact will be used exclusively for education, focusing on recruiting and retaining the best teachers, helping underserved students from persistently failing schools, and increasing funding for higher education.

The bill also closes loopholes and shuts down card games not authorized by the Legislature, limits gambling to current locations, removes inactive and delinquent gambling permits, and prohibits the issuance of new gambling permits. This will limit gambling in our state and protect our national and international brand.

I believe this bill strikes a reasonable balance between controlling gambling and establishing long-term certainty and predictability for existing gambling entities in our state. I will keep you updated as the bill moves through the legislative process.

Health Subcommittee Passes Bill to Increase Drug Price Transparency

This week, the Health Innovation Subcommittee passed HB 589, which relates to drug price transparency. Specifically, the bill doubles the number of drugs listed on MyFloridaRx.com, which is Florida's prescription drug pricing website. The website currently 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 the website by county, city, and drug.

This is a good bill and I'm proud to support it. More information provided to the public through MyFloridaRx.com will allow Floridians to make cost-effective choices for themselves and their families. Ultimately, drug price transparency empowers patients and lowers the costs of drugs by encouraging competition.

Health Subcommittee Passes Bill Addressing Self-sufficiency

This week, the Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee passed HB 581. This bill changes two programs to encourage families to be self-sufficient.

First, the bill ends a change made to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2010 during the devastating economic downturn. That change helped more people qualify for food assistance in that tough time. Now, about 3.3 million Floridians are on SNAP. Fortunately, our economy



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has improved since then — for example, the state’s unemployment rate fell from 11.4% to 4.9%. Under the bill, as of January 1, 2018, the state will reduce eligibility to the lower federal minimum level instead of the higher state 2010 level.

Second, the bill creates better workforce programs so individuals on cash assistance can find work to support their families. Some cash assistance recipients have problems that make it difficult for them to obtain and keep jobs. Under the bill, at least three regional workforce boards must create new workforce services to help those getting temporary cash assistance become “work ready”.

I think we can all agree that we should encourage families to be self-sufficient. This bill preserves SNAP as a safety-net for the most needy while enhancing our workforce system to better serve those with significant barriers to employment. I look forward to supporting this good bill as it moves through the legislative process.

Judiciary Committee Sends Key Bills to the House Floor

This week, the House Judiciary Committee passed three important bills: HJR 1, regarding judicial term limits; HB 301, regarding Florida Supreme Court reporting requirements; and HB 527, regarding the death penalty. All three bills have passed all of their committee stops and are ready to go to the floor to be voted on by the entire House of Representatives.

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 12 consecutive 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. 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.

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. 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.

HB 527 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.

I look forward to supporting all three bills on the House floor.



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Criminal Justice Subcommittee Brings Clarity to Stand Your Ground

The House Criminal Justice Subcommittee passed HB 245 to bring needed clarity to the state's Stand Your Ground law. Florida's Stand Your Ground law has been the focal point for a lot of media misinformation and sensationalism. Despite how it has been portrayed, the law simply allows for a pre-trial hearing for an accused who claims that he or she acted in self-defense. The purpose of the law is to support the profound right to self-defense and to allow individuals who act in self-defense to avoid the lengthy and costly burden of a full trial.

Unfortunately, courts ruled that the burden of proof during the pre-trial Stand Your Ground hearing is on the person claiming they acted in self-defense. I believe this interpretation of the law has been incredibly destructive to its intent; individuals who claim they acted in self-defense under Stand Your Ground now have to essentially put forth the costly and time consuming case the law sought to avoid.

HB 245 follows the intent of the law and puts the burden on state, not accused, to prove the accused did not act in self-defense.