



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/_ySqLcy7odQ

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House Subcommittee Votes to Create Veterans Sales Tax Holiday

On Wednesday morning the Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee passed a bill that creates an annual sales tax holiday for Florida veterans. The sales tax holiday will occur on Veterans Day starting in 2017, and it will cover certain clothing and footwear purchases, just in time for the holidays.

I strongly support this bill. Florida should do everything in its power to honor its veterans who have sacrificed so much for this country, and this bill is a small contribution to that end.

Subcommittee Cracks Down on Wasteful Government Spending

This week, the House Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee passed a bill to prohibit state agency inspectors general from receiving bonuses for work performance. HB 207 was filed in response to a report about a state agency hosting a dinner that served filet mignon, lobster, and top shelf liquor with taxpayer money. The agency’s inspector general, the fiscal watchdog of the agency, received a bonus along with over 60 other employees.

I believe this bill is an important step to crack down on wasteful government spending by helping ensure those who are meant to watch over an agency’s spending, the agency inspectors general, remain as independent as possible.

PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee Hears Presentation on Civics Education

The PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee met this week to discuss civics education in Florida. To initiate the discussion, the Lou Frey Institute—an organization devoted to civic education policy—gave a presentation to the subcommittee.

The Institute stated that Florida's approach to and success with civic education has become a national model; however, there is room for improvement. In particular, the Institute laid out challenges to advancing civics education, including the need to improve early civics education in elementary schools, high turnover rates for civics teachers in middle schools, and the growing trend of merging civics with literature in high school.



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I believe civics education is the necessary first step in understanding the foundation of our government and our roles as citizens of this great country. I look forward to supporting legislation to improve or expand civics education in our schools.

Criminal Justice Subcommittee Advances Important Sentencing Legislation

The House Criminal Justice Subcommittee approved two important bills relating to sentencing: HB 157, which deals with the sentencing of non-violent felons; and HB 527, which will reinstate Florida's ability to sentence the most violent offenders to death.

HB 157 is a measure that will allow county courts to sentence certain non-violent felony offenders to serve their time in county jails, as opposed to state prisons. I believe this effort will help limit overcrowding of our state prisons and ensure that our most secure prisons are reserved for violent and dangerous offenders.

HB 527 will restore Florida's death penalty law, which has been stalled until we make the changes to law that the Florida Supreme Court held were required by the 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.

Committee Approves Local Government Ethics Reform

The Public Integrity & Ethics 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.

During its last meeting, the Public Integrity & Ethics Committee passed measures that would extend the current ban on post-service lobbying for legislators, statewide elected officers, and appointed state officers from two years to six years. I supported those actions to improve ethics on the state-level, and I'm happy to support these ethics 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 that sacred truth.

Public Integrity & Ethics Committee Sheds Lights on Court Delay

This week, the Public Integrity & Ethics Committee highlighted an egregious Florida Supreme Court delay in judicial discipline, exposing a Circuit Court Judge who has waited 23 months of his four years in office for the Court to hand out discipline for conduct that occurred prior to his election to judicial office. Although it could have suspended and reprimanded the judge in March of 2015, the Court took eight months to order the judge to show cause why he should not be removed from the bench. But now the Court has taken no action 13 months after receiving the written responses in the matter.



House Committee Leads Discussion on Local Government Fiscal Transparency

The Ways & Means Committee began discussing ways to increase local government fiscal transparency, an important issue for communities across the state. The committee focused on solutions that will help citizens gain access to important information so they can be more engaged in the decision-making process with their local officials.

Specifically, the committee focused on four ideas: 1) easier access to voting records related to local option taxes and debt issuances; 2) easier access to tax history and annual millage rate information through property appraisers; 3) expanding public notice requirements and information; and 4) utilizing debt affordability reports.

I think all four ideas have merit and I look forward to supporting them. I believe Floridians deserve more access to information on financial matters that directly impact their livelihood. As this issue develops, I will make sure to keep you informed.

Healthcare Subcommittees Pass Free Market Healthcare Reforms

This week, the Health Quality Subcommittee and Health Innovation Subcommittee passed important free market healthcare reforms.

The Health Quality Subcommittee passed proposed committee bill HQS 17-01, which: 1) authorizes and encourages the use of telehealth by all healthcare practitioners, including all out-of-state practitioners; and 2) allows patients to have their health care needs addressed by experienced, highly-trained advanced practice registered nurses without the unnecessary and expensive supervision of a physician.

The Health Innovation Subcommittee passed the following bills. HB 7 eliminates the certificate of need program (CON) in Florida. The CON program requires certain health care providers to obtain state approval before entering the market or offering certain new or expanded services. The CON program restricts competition in the healthcare market causing unnecessary and unfair cost increases for consumers.

HB 145 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 acute hospitalization. RCCs exist in some states, but not Florida.

HB 161 helps expand the use of direct primary care (DPC) in Florida by preventing DPC agreements from being regulated like insurance. 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 in the agreement at no extra charge. One of the most critical problems in healthcare is out of control and unjustifiable



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costs. Innovations like DPC cut costs by eliminating the administrative hassles of the third-party payer system.

HB 375 requires all Florida hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to complete and publish patient safety culture surveys. A "patient safety culture survey" is a survey completed by healthcare facility which asks employees about patient safety and quality of care. The survey is designed to measure the climate of safety at the facility. The surveys help hospitals identify and fix problems. If published, the survey data can also help potential patients make decisions about which facilities are best for their own care and the care of their families.

All of these measures are aimed at increasing access to quality and affordable healthcare for all Floridians. I encourage you to research each bill or to contact my office for more information.