

WEEKLY TALLAHASSEE UPDATE



Now that the Florida Legislative Session is more than halfway over, we will start to see a better picture of what will end up passing and failing before the end of the 60-day session. For this week's update I am going to provide brief updates of Florida Chamber endorsed bills.

COVID-19 Liability Protections for health care providers, SB 7014, has passed both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate. The bill, sponsored by Representative Colleen Burton and Senator Danny Burgess, will extend the COVID-19 liability protections for health care providers through June 1, 2023. These protections were created to discourage frivolous litigation and protect employers that were following governmental health and safety guidelines. The bill must be signed by the Governor for it to become law.

SB 800 Economic Development sponsored by Senator Albritton and HB 685 Rural Development sponsored by Representative Drake, both related to rural economic development, were heard in their second committee stop last week. The purpose of these bills are to incentivize economic development in rural communities and to improve access to rural economic development programs. The summary on the Florida Senate website states "reduces required grant match percentage rate and authorizes in-kind contributions under regional rural development grant programs; removes match requirement under specified conditions; increases percentage of grants the Department of Economic Opportunity may award; revises criteria for awarding grants; removes local match requirement."

CS/CS/SB 1024 - Renewable Energy Generation, sponsored by Senator Bradley passed through the Community Affairs Committee favorable on a party line vote. The purpose of this bill is to "amend Florida statute 163.04 relating to energy devices based on renewable resources, to allow governing entities with a deed restriction, covenant, declaration, or similar binding agreement affecting the alteration of residential dwellings or condominiums to prohibit the installation of solar collectors in locations outside of specifically designated parameters." Essentially, the purpose of this bill is to modernize Florida's net metering policy to correct issues due to the substantial growth in the renewable energy market. This bill will have one more committee it must pass through favorably before making it to the full Florida Senate.

I am going to conclude this week's update by mentioning the "B" word.... Budget. This past week the House and Senate passed their proposed budgets out of each of their Appropriations Committees. These bills will now move to the full floor of their chambers, and will then go to the conference committee process to work on having both proposed budgets match. A final budget must be passed, per the Florida Constitution, before the end of this year's session on March 11th. It is law that there must be a 72 hour "cooling off" period that the budget must be published for public view before a vote can be taken. This means the final agreed upon budget must be finalized by March 8th, if the session is to end on or before its scheduled time. Keep in mind, once the budget is ironed out, the Governor of Florida still has the power to line item veto any and all items in the budget that he does not want. Each year the Governor publishes a budget of what he would like to see included, though the Governor does not have the conference ability like the House and the Senate to work on what to include and what not to include. The Governor just has the power of the line item veto.



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Here is a snapshot of what is currently on the proposed budgets between the House, Senate, and the Governor's Office:

Quick Response Training Grant - \$7.5 million proposed by all three.

Florida Job Growth Grant Fund - \$0 Senate, \$25 million House, \$100 million Governor.

Enterprise Florida Operating Budget - \$12 million proposed by all three.

VISIT Florida - \$50 million proposed by all three.

Space Florida - \$12.5 million proposed by all three.

Space Florida Infrastructure Fund - \$0 million Senate, \$0 House, \$6 million Governor.

Florida State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP) - \$209 million Senate, \$268 million House, \$220 million Governor.

Florida State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) and other affordable housing programs - \$128 million Senate, \$0 House, \$95 million Governor.

I highly recommend going to the Florida Senate and House websites and review the PDF versions of their most current budget proposals. Use the search function to search the budgets for words like Sarasota, Venice, North Port, etc. to see what funds might be in the mix to head back to our area. The Senate proposed budget SB 2500 is currently 464 pages and the House budget APC1 is 416 pages.

Thank you for reading this week and I look forward to more developments in the following weeks as Florida's 2022 session winds down.

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Sources:

www.myfloridahouse.gov

www.flsenate.gov