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Florida Legislative Session Week 7 Update



Both the House and the Senate advanced legislation again this week. The Senate passed HB 1087, which protects services for victims of domestic

violence, while the House teed up both a bold proposal for the University of Florida to absorb the state's two youngest and smallest universities and a plan that would establish new regulations on the vape industry for a full vote on the House floor. Meanwhile, Governor Ron DeSantis emphasized that although the state is preparing for the arrival of the coronavirus, there are no confirmed cases in Florida.

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The Legislature continued its work in other policy issues, including:

Cannabis

Week 7 has ended and there appears to be a deal on THC caps. A priority of Speaker Oliva, the cap made an appearance in the Senate for this first time this session in the DOH package this week. As proposed in SB 230, a limit of 10% on THC content would be placed on smokable cannabis flower purchased for patients under 21, however if they are certified as terminal, the cap would not apply. In hemp this week, Senator Montford's State Hemp Program, SB 1876, has been moving steadily through the Senate and has had its last committee hearing placed on the committee agenda for Rules during next week. This will be the bill's last stop before heading to the floor should it be found favorable by the Rules committee. Its house

companion, HB 1063 sponsored by Representative Drake, is also in its last committee and has been placed on the agenda for State Affairs with a strike-all. SB 1286, Contraband in Specified Facilities, became an engrossed bill this week and will head to Governor DeSantis' desk for review.

Education

There are several education packages still in play with two weeks left to go in the 2020 Florida Legislative Session. HB 7087 regarding university mergers was reported favorable out of its last committee in the House with an amendment that New College and Florida Polytechnic would both be merged into University of Florida. A measure that would require each public school to implement panic button system (HB 23) passed its final committee in the House. The companion version of this bill (SB 70) also completed its final committee stop. The topic of panic alarms became a hot topic this week, as multiple vendors opposed the legislation because it would require the Department of Education to issue a competitive solicitation. Those in opposition felt that instead of one statewide vendor there should be multiple vendors across the state.

Environment

Week 7 of Session saw two major environmental measures complete their respective journeys through the committee process in both the House and Senate. SB 1450 and HB 1091, relating to Environmental Enforcement, increase the maximum daily fines for environmental violations, such as an unauthorized discharge of domestic wastewater, and also stipulate that

each day a violation is not corrected constitutes a separate offense. SB 1450 cleared the Appropriations Committee and HB 1091 cleared the State Affairs Committee. In the same State Affairs hearing on Thursday, HB 1343, relating to Water Quality Improvements, was amended to match up with SB 712 and received a favorable vote. HB 1343 is a comprehensive water quality package that contains the Governor's environmental priorities, including oversight of septic systems, creation of a wastewater treatment matching grant program, revision of basin management action plans to combat pollution in water systems, and promotion of best management practices in urban and agricultural settings, to name a few. Both sets of bills are now ready to be heard on the House and Senate Floors during the final stretch of the 2020 Session.

Health Care

The spread of coronavirus is dominating the health care news headlines around the world. It culminated in Florida this week with a press conference by Governor Ron DeSantis and Surgeon General Scott Rivkees in which they indicated Florida was preparing for the virus' inevitable arrival. Meanwhile, the House doubled-down on Speaker Oliva's top priority, scope expansion for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physicians Assistants, by amending the substance of that bill into another bill, then passing both out of their last committee to set up a full vote by the House. The Senate has only inched forward on that idea by introducing a limited 10-year pilot program. Also this week, Attorney General Ashley Moody's office announced Florida will receive a portion of a \$1.6 billion

opioid crisis settlement with drug maker Mallinckrodt PLC.

Insurance and Financial Services

The House Commerce Committee passed two bills this week, both of which are now available to be heard by the whole chamber. HB 771 by Rep. Erin Grall repeals Florida's mandatory PIP law and replaces it with a bodily injury mandate. HB 895 by Rep. David Santiago reforms the state's insurer bad faith law and also creates a new fee schedule for Emergency Room care provided following an auto accident. The Senate companion to both of these bills have not been heard by the Committee on Banking and Insurance, so the chances of these passing the full legislature remain slim. Coming next week, SB 1672 Protection of Vulnerable Investors by Senators Broxson and Baxley will be heard in its last committee of reference Monday. Its House companion bill has already passed unanimously off the House floor and has been sent to the Senate. Also up in committee next week is the Financial Technology Sandbox Bill SB 1870, and its linked bill SB 1872, which exempts certain information related to the FinTech Sandbox from public record. SB 1870 creates a The Financial Technology Sandbox is intended to allow financial technology innovators to test innovative financial products or services in a supervised, flexible regulatory sandbox, using waivers of specified general law and corresponding rule requirements.

Local Government

Week 7 of Florida's Legislative Session brought the end of almost all

committee meetings in the House and Senate. SB 1066 dealing with impact fees was temporarily postponed this week in the Senate Appropriations Committee and has one last chance to be heard next week. The Senate passed their sales tax holiday bills through committee this week. CS/SB 524 establishes an 18-day “disaster preparedness” sales tax holiday, from Friday, May 29, to Monday, June 15, 2020 and CS/SB 542 establishes a 10-day “back-to-school” sales tax holiday, from Friday, July 31, 2020, to Sunday, August 9, 2020. These will eventually be negotiated with the House in the final tax package. SJR 1076 passed it’s final committee of reference and is headed to the Senate floor. This proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution to allow the homestead property tax discount for disabled veterans to transfer to a veteran’s surviving spouse upon the death of the veteran, provided the veteran had received the discount. The discount is available for veterans age 65 or older who have permanent, combat-related disabilities. The joint resolution requires approval by a three-fifths vote of the membership of each house of the Legislature for final passage. Budget Conference should commence during week 8. Detailed Committee reports are below.

Technology

Week 7 of the 2020 Florida Legislative Session brought unanimous passage of HB 969 Broadband Internet Service on the House floor. The bill authorizes the Department of Transportation to allocate funding from the State Transportation Trust Fund toward broadband infrastructure projects. Its Senate companion, SB 1166, has been placed on the on the calendar on

second reading. The trio of bills creating the Florida Digital service and a state financial technology sandbox have all been added to the agenda in their final Senate committees and are slotted for hearing next week. The House companion measures are also in their last committees of reference and await placement on their respective agendas.

Transportation

Rep. Andrade's Transportation bill, HB 395, was reported favorably in its last committee of reference last week and heads to the floor for a full vote of the House. The omnibus bill covers a wide variety of changes including the Florida Rail Enterprise, updates to the Move Over Law, changes in bonding limits for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and revises qualification requirements for contractors bidding on FDOT projects. The Broadband Bill HB 969 (Rep. Drake) passed favorably out of the House this week. It's Senate companion SB 1166 (Sen. Albritton) is ready for a floor vote in the Senate. Both bills authorize up to \$5 million from the State Transportation Trust Fund to be used for broadband infrastructure projects within or adjacent to multi-use corridors. SB 1352, by Sen. Brandes, related to Transportation Companies revises the definition for the term "for-hire-vehicle" and which includes certain exclusions, has been placed on its last committee agenda for Monday. Several other bills - related to electric bicycles and traffic and pedestrian safety - are also queued up for hearings in their last committees of reference and floor votes.



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