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Florida Legislative Session Week 8 Update



The Governor declared a statewide health emergency this week and requested financial aid from House and Senate leaders to ensure his

administration is fully staffed to take on the coronavirus. He also announced that the Department of Children and Families filed a lawsuit against the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and its executive leadership and board members. Meanwhile, House Speaker Oliva said several gaming issues have not been settled and probably won't be when the regular Session ends on March 13.

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Other legislative highlights include:

[Cannabis](#)

The second to last week of the 2020 Florida Legislative Session had a number of bills being heard, discussed and debated on both chamber floors. In the House chamber, HB 713 passed with a 79-31 vote, meaning its amendment that caps THC for those under 21 also passed. This amendment was proposed to cap flower and derivatives to 10% for those underneath the age of 21 with exceptions such as those terminally ill. A similar amendment has been proposed in the Senate for SB 230 but has yet to be heard and is facing push back concerning the 10% cap. SB 1876 State Hemp Program sponsored by Senator Montford has advanced through the Senate, being placed on third reading for March 9. Its House companion

bill, HB 1063 by Representative Drake has currently been temporarily postponed on its second reading.

Education

Week 8 of the Florida Legislative Session has come to a close. The final round of regularly scheduled committee meetings took place; and now legislators will focus on debating legislation on the floor of their respective chambers. Legislation like HB 7067 which expands vouchers, HB 7011 on student athletes, and SB 70 on panic alarms have successfully passed their respective chambers.

Environment

Week 8 of the 2020 Session saw the end of the committee process and the rush of bills in the House to stay alive. Per House Rules, a bill must be heard on the Floor by the end of Week 8 in order to be eligible for final passage. The major environmental bills that we have been working on made good progress this week. SB 712, the Governor's priority Clean Water Act, passed the Senate 39-0 and will be heard in the House next week. Also, HB 1091, which increases civil penalties for environmental violations, passed the House 106-0 and will be heard in the Senate. In addition, the House and Senate began their formal Budget Conference negotiations at the end of the week. Details of the environmental budget will be provided next week.

Health Care

The Florida House this week made good on Speaker Oliva's top priority by passing not one, but two bills that contain independent practice for advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants. The initiative has become a sticking point to bringing Session in for a close on time as it has become intertwined with budget negotiations, and both Oliva and Senate President Galvano declared this week that it was highly unlikely Session would end on time next Friday as budget conference still has not begun. The House also passed bills this week that give flu and strep testing responsibilities to pharmacists and authorize certified nursing assistants and home health aides to administer medications under the direction of a nurse. Meanwhile, Governor DeSantis announced that tens of thousands of novel coronavirus testing kits were being sent to Florida as the number of Floridians diagnosed rose to nine.

Local Government

The House and Senate began their budget negotiations on Saturday and all unresolved issues will be bumped to the full appropriation Chairmen by Monday at 1pm. SB 410 relating to Growth Management passed the Florida Senate this week. There are problematic provisions in the bill relating to Charter Counties that we expect to be addressed in the House next week. SB 1066 related to Impact Fees has moved forward and been placed on third reading for Monday, March 9 and will head to the House. The House companion has not yet been placed on Special Order. HB 1371 dealing with mid-block cross walks was heard this week on the House floor and will be voted on next week on third reading. However, the Senate

companion was never heard in its last committee of reference. The ad valorem tax discount for spouses of certain deceased veterans who had permanent, combat-related disabilities passed both chambers unanimously and will head to the Governor's desk. We will keep you updated with budget highlights as conference progresses.

Technology

During the second to last week of the 2020 Legislative Session several technology bills remain alive and poised for passage. House Bill 969, Broadband Internet Service, passed out of both chambers unanimously and will now be transmitted to the Governor for signature. The bill creates the Florida Office of Broadband within the Department of Economic Opportunity Division of Community Development and directs that team to devise strategies aimed at expanding broadband service offerings and coverage across the state. The bill also authorizes funds from the State Transportation Trust Fund be used for broadband infrastructure projects. The House and Senate bills designed to create the Florida Digital Service, the financial technology sandbox and the public records guidelines associated with these initiatives are scheduled to be heard March 9. Expectations are these changes to the state's IT infrastructure will be enacted.

Transportation

Heading to the Governor's desk as an enrolled bill is HB 969 Broadband Internet Service. This bill, which was unanimously passed in both chambers,

authorizes the allocation of funds from the State Transportation Trustfund for broadband infrastructure projects. HB 1039 Transportation Network Companies advanced in the House and has been placed on third reading for March 9. This bill focuses on making multiple revisions including Removes for-hire vehicles from list of vehicles that are not considered transportation network carriers, providing immunity from certain liabilities and also that insurance requirements must be satisfied. SB 7018, a priority of Governor DeSantis, is a proposal relating to essential state infrastructure. Under the current proposal, the FDOT is authorized to plan, design and construct strategic staging areas for emergency response on the Florida Turnpike System and the proposed M-Cores corridors. These staging areas would be used for staging of emergency supplies, equipment and personnel. However, a secondary utilization for the staging areas would be specifically for truck parking for commercial motor vehicles. The bill also requires the Public Service Commission to develop and recommend a plan for the advancement of electric vehicle charging station infrastructure.



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