

PBC Legislative Update



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February 10-14 Committee Week Update

State Issues

Gaming

By: Corcoran & Johnston and Ericks Consultants

On Monday, in the Senate Committee on Gaming meeting, the elements and options for inclusion in a proposed committee bill were discussed. The bill is expected to be published February 24th and be taken up for the first time in the week of March 3rd.

Chairman Richter went over the sections of the proposed bill (which has not yet been released in draft form) in detail. The Chair stressed that the proposed bill is a "starting line" for discussions and is expected to change before being filed by the committee. The bill would remove the patchwork of gaming laws in current statute and place them into two comprehensive, modernized chapters: one for legal gambling and one for illegal gambling. The bill would also establish a gaming commission, address live racing, consider parity for existing pari-mutuels and contain a placeholder for destination casinos. There will be a separate bill that would place a constitutional amendment on the ballot to require the people's vote for any future gaming expansion. The committee discussed the several counties outside of Broward and Miami-Dade whose residences voted to have slots but have not yet had their wishes recognized. There was also discussion regarding the impact of reform on the Seminole Compact. A representative from the Isle of Capri Casino presented in greater depth on pari-mutuel parity.

Senator Abruzzo asked if the Gaming Control Board would determine the location and amount of licenses or if that power would still lie with legislature. The Chairman responded that this area of the bill was still in development, but that he doesn't see the Legislature "stepping out of that arena."

Sober Homes

By: Corcoran & Johnston and Ericks Consultants

The Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs approved SB 582 by Senator Clemens with support from the Florida Association of Counties and Florida League of Cities. The bill would:

- Prohibit a sober house transitional living home from operating in this state without a valid certificate of registration from the Department of Children and Families
- Require a sober house operator to annually apply for a certificate of registration with the department
- Require certain sober house transitional living homes to apply for a certificate of registration by a specified date
- Require the department to adopt rules pertaining to the application process for obtaining a certificate of registration

Operators voiced concerns about background checks as many successful operators were once in recovery themselves and often have felony charges due to their history of struggles. They also voiced concerns that many in recovery do not want their locations

to be made public. The Florida Association of Recovery Residences testified that allowing the association to oversee the homes would be more effective than DCF oversight. Todd Bonlarron, on behalf of Palm Beach County, stated that this bill helps to weave out operators of these "sober homes" that are operating in a manner that is unbecoming to those seeking help.

Sen. Clemens admitted the bill was not perfect but a step in the right direction. The committee ultimately agreed, passing the bill unanimously. It has two more committee stops before going before the full Senate. Its House companion has not yet been heard in a committee.

Florida Retirement System

By: Corcoran & Johnston and Ericks Consultants

The House Appropriations Committee and the House State Affairs committee both received overviews of the Florida Retirement System in anticipation of a reform proposal considered a priority of the Speaker. Chairman Boyd announced that the purpose and content of the meeting was informational and to refrain from questions about details and specifics. The overviews discussed unfunded liabilities, the pros and cons of defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) plans and explored the idea of a DB/ DC hybrid plan. Meanwhile, the Senate Community Affairs filed a bill that would move all new employees after July 1, 2015 to a "cash-balance" or 401k-style plan. The bill exempts high-risk employees such as firefighters and police officers, worrying those who oppose the bill that the opposition will be weaker this year than last.

Red Light Cameras

By: Corcoran & Johnston and Ericks Consultants

Sponsors of the bill to repeal red light cameras, Sen. Brandes and Rep. Trujillo, held a press conference unveiling a study by OPPAGA that concluded that, while fatalities were down, crashes increased in intersections with red light cameras since their authorization. The lawmakers used the study to claim that use of red light cameras is motivated by money rather than public safety. OPPAGA presented the same study to the Senate Committee on Transportation, where several members noted the study was insufficient and called for more data. It was pointed out in committee that intersections with no red light cameras were not studied for comparison nor was there an explanation for the increase in crashes coinciding with a decrease in fatalities. It was also pointed out that the revenue collected by red light cameras funds more than just local government, such as safety net hospitals.

Parasailing

By: Ericks Consultants

The Senate Regulated Industries Committee unanimously approved a bill by Sen. Maria Sachs that would regulate the parasailing industry by requiring insurance, imposing weather stipulations, etc. The Committee heard from people injured from parasailing accidents and their families. The bill has two more committee stops before going before the full Senate. Its House companion passed its first of three committees last week.

Commissioner Putnam's Energy Proposals

By: Ericks Consultants

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Putnam detailed energy proposals before the House Energy and Utilities Subcommittee. The proposals include cutting the business sales tax on energy utilities in half over three years and redirecting the revenue from the remaining tax into PECO; establishing an Energy Star tax holiday; studying natural gas usage; creating a matching grant program for clean energy research and development; collecting data on electric vehicle charging stations; and workforce training.



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Federal Issues

Federal Update – Week of February 10th

By: Becker & Poliakoff

THE SENATE will be voting on a motion to proceed on S. 1963, repealing a cut in cost-of-living adjustments for working-age military retirees. The change was part of the budget agreement passed in December, Public Law 113-67.

THE HOUSE will be considering the following legislation:

H.R. 2431, reauthorizes the National Integrated Drought Information System through FY-18 and authorizes \$13.5 million a year for the program. The bill requires the system to incorporate an early warning system for drought conditions and partner with one or more cooperative institutes, usually consisting of universities and local governments, to enhance drought forecasting.

Florida Association of Counties Federal Fly-In

By: Miami-Dade OIA Staff

The Florida Association of Counties (FAC) was in Washington this week for a series of meetings with the state's Congressional delegation, other key Members of Congress and Administration officials.

The meetings focused on needed fixes to the National Florida Insurance Program (NFIP). On October 1 new rates will take effect based on a FEMA study for flood insurance affordability. These new rate increases will have substantial financial implications for many homeowners in Florida, the Gulf States and other policyholders in flood prone areas. FAC and OIA strongly advocated for legislation to be voted on by the House, which would delay the rate hikes, provide the potential for some relief to the hardest-hit policy holders, in addition to ensuring the long term financial viability for a robust NFIP.

Shortly after the meetings concluded on Wednesday with the Congressional delegation, Majority Leader Eric Cantor announced that a bill to address some of the issues raised by FAC, would be headed to the House for consideration in the near future. This action should represent a major win for the broad coalition of groups that have been pushing for these fixes, and a significant step forward for FAC, Palm Beach County, the citizens of Florida and around the country where the new rates would take effect.

The Senate passed Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, S.1926 two weeks ago and was supported by both Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio.

Upcoming 2014 Legislative Session Dates

February 17, 2014	Interim Committee Week
March 4, 2014	Legislative Session Convenes Bill Filing Deadline – 12:00 pm
March 5, 2014	Palm Beach County Day
May 2, 2014	Legislative Session Scheduled to Conclude