



April 11, 2008

Immigration

Collectively, almost a dozen bills have been filed in the House and Senate relating to immigration this year.

On Tuesday, the House Committee on State Affairs workshopped several of these bills: HB 73 by Rep. Don Brown, R-Defuniak Springs; HB 159 by Rep. Sandy Adams, R-Oviedo; HB 571 by Rep. Dick Kravitz, R-Orange Park; HB 577 by Rep. Trudi Williams, R-Ft. Myers; HB 821 by Rep. Gayle Harrell, R-Port St. Lucie; and HB 1247 by Rep. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach.

The bills addressed a wide variety of subjects pertaining to immigration. Rep. Williams' bill, for example, would allow nonviolent inmates who have served half their sentence to be given a free plane ticket home. Other bills addressed such matters as increased enforcement, verification procedures and the denial of benefits to people in the country illegally.

Although all the bills were heard and discussed, no votes were taken at the committee meeting. Sponsors apparently feel that the federal government is failing to handle the issue appropriately and are encouraging legislative leaders to create state law to address it instead.

House Speaker Marco Rubio, R-Miami, said he believes that immigration law should be handled at the federal level: "There is nothing the state of Florida can do unilaterally to solve global warming," he observed. "And there is nothing we can do unilaterally to solve immigration."

No immigration bills have been heard in the Senate.

Farm Bureau policy supports immigration reform being handled at the federal level.

Revised Industry Bill Moves Forward

On Wednesday, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed an edited version of the bill containing several of the agricultural industry's legislative priorities.

Most controversial issues have been removed from the revised version, SB 1376. Despite attempts to compromise, however, the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida Stormwater Association continue to protest two major provisions:

First, a provision stipulating that counties may not enforce any ordinance, resolution, regulation, rule or policy that duplicates any state, federal or water management district rule or regulation continues to face fire from the counties. Audubon of Florida also testified against that measure, maintaining it would be harmful to the protection of wetlands.

Second, the counties and the stormwater association also continue to oppose language that would prohibit counties from issuing assessments or fees on agricultural lands for stormwater management even though most farmers and ranchers use Best Management Practices to keep water within the boundaries of their land.

At the meeting, representatives from Hillsborough and Miami-Dade counties focused their arguments on the enforcement/duplication of regulation issue.

Katie Edwards, executive director for the Dade County Farm Bureau, did an excellent job refuting their arguments and explaining the hardships over-regulation has caused farmers in the Miami-Dade County area.

The bill passed unanimously.

Budget

The House and Senate made final moves this week toward passing their individual budgets. With major differences between the two, conference negotiations are expected to begin next week.

The Senate approved a \$65.9 billion budget on Wednesday, cutting more than \$3 billion from current spending levels due to economic downturns on both state and national levels. The House proposes a \$65.1 billion plan.

Both budgets include cuts to legislative pay. The Senate reduces salaries of the governor, Cabinet members, and state legislators by 10 percent. The House version cuts lawmakers' pay by two and a half percent. Neither budget provides for pay raises for state employees. Each side cuts about 1000 state jobs.

The House also chose to save \$300 million this year by suspending Florida Forever, the state's environmental land buying program. The Senate, however, includes money for the program in its budget.

The House budget contains a \$400 million-plus sweep in unspent money from a transportation trust fund. The Senate's does not.

In K-12 education, the Senate proposal cuts per-student spending by \$115; the House cuts \$86 per student.

Both budgets differ greatly from the recommendations offered by Governor Charlie Crist in January. His proposal featured a \$70 billion spending plan, with a \$1 billion increase in education monies. He encouraged a greater reliance on trust funds and reserves as a way to avoid major budget cuts.

These budget cuts affect everyone in the state, including agriculture. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services was cut by \$11 million in the Senate and \$16 million in the House. IFAS was cut by 2.468 million in the Senate and 3.917 million in the House.

Legislation by Sen. Jeff Atwater, R-North Palm Beach, and Rep. Baxter Troutman, R-Winter Haven, providing a sales tax exemption on electricity used in packing houses not on farms is also endangered by the budget deficit. It is very doubtful at this time whether the legislature will approve any sales tax exemption when the state budget is facing such drastic cuts on all fronts.

Water Management Appointments

Gov. Charlie Crist has recently announced appointments to water management district (WMD) governing boards across the state. All appointments must be confirmed by the Senate.

South Florida WMD

Paul C. Huck Jr. of Coral Gables, attorney, Colson Hicks Eidson.

Robert "Jerry" Montgomery of Lake Buena Vista, senior vice president of conservation and environmental sustainability, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts.

Northwest Florida WMD

Peter Antonacci of Tallahassee, shareholder, GrayRobinson.

Jose Luis Rodriguez of Monticello, chief executive officer, Trans Tech Agriculture Corporation.

St. John's River WMD

Douglas C. Bournique of Vero Beach, executive vice president, Indian River Citrus League.

Hans G. Tanzler III of Jacksonville, president, Marion Equities.

Southwest Florida WMD





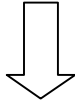


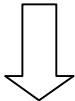
Bryan K. Beswick of Arcadia, grove manager, Blue Goose Growers.

Hugh M. Gramling of Plant City, executive director, Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers.

Judith C. Whitehead of Brooksville, owner, Residential Appraisal Service

Two additional appointments to the Southwest Florida WMD were announced previously: Albert Joerger of Sarasota, founder and president, of the Sarasota Conservation Foundation and Henry "Paul" Senft of Haines City, owner, Townsend-Senft Consulting and Insurance, Inc.

More appointments are forthcoming. Farm Bureau thanks everyone who applied for appointments or who supported those who did.

TITLE/BILL NUMBER	SUBJECT	STATUS	POSITION
General Ag HB 761 – Pickens SB 2060 – Dean SB 1376 – Dean	Contains several FB legislative priorities	<i>House</i> – Policy & Budget <i>Senate</i> – Regulated Industries <i>Senate</i> – General Govt Appropriations	
Overwidth Ag Equipment HB 1255 – Evers SB 1946 – Baker	Provides no permits are required for transporting overwidth ag equipment	<i>House</i> – Economic Expansion & Infrastructure Council <i>Senate</i> – Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations	
Sales Tax Exemption-Packinghouses HB 135 – Troutman SB 394 – Atwater	Expands exemption on sales tax for electricity to packinghouses not on farms	<i>House</i> – Policy & Budget <i>Senate</i> – Finance & Tax	
Surveyors and Mappers HB 789 – Kendrick SB 2054 – Baker	Creates criminal penalties for surveyors who damage or destroy fences on agricultural property	<i>House</i> – Safety & Security Council <i>Senate</i> – Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations	
Springs SB 2394 – Saunders	Pilot program regulating land uses in springs areas	<i>Senate</i> – Community Affairs	
Springs Protection HB 0031 – Boyd SB 2078 – Oelrich	Creates BMP education program	<i>House</i> – Environment & Natural Resource Council <i>Senate</i> – Community Affairs	
Secondary Metals Recyclers HB 105 – Troutman SB 556 – Constantine	Increases penalties for theft of copper wire from businesses	<i>House</i> – Floor <i>Senate</i> – Criminal Justice	
Illegal Immigration HB 73 – Brown HB 821 – Harrell HB 107 – Snyder HB 577 – Williams HB 159 – Adams SB 624 – Dockery SB 424 – Haridopolos SB 1086 – Bennett	Creates state immigration laws and enforcement procedures	<i>House</i> – State Affairs <i>House</i> – State Affairs <i>House</i> – Criminal Justice <i>House</i> – State Affairs <i>House</i> – State Affairs <i>Senate</i> – Criminal Justice <i>Senate</i> – Criminal Justice <i>Senate</i> – Judiciary	

Property Rights HB 0881 – Precourt SB 1578 - Baker	Revises Bert Harris Private Property Rights Act	<i>House</i> - Policy & Budget <i>Senate</i> – Community Affairs	★
Land Development Regulation HB 1173 – Mayfield SB 2246 – Baker	Concerns issues relating to agricultural enclaves	<i>House</i> – Environment & Natural Resources Council <i>Senate</i> – General Government Appropriations	★
Australian Pine (Wind Break) HB 353 – Poppell SB 2624 – Haridopolos	Provides for use of Australian Pines as windbreaks in some commercial citrus groves	<i>House</i> – Environment & Natural Resources Council <i>Senate</i> – Environment Preservation & Conservation	↔
Growth Management SB 474 – Garcia	Revises growth management laws	<i>Senate</i> – Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations	↔
Energy SB 1544 – Saunders PCB ENRC 01 –Environment & Natural Resources Council	Omnibus energy package	<i>Senate</i> – General Government Appropriations <i>House</i> – Awaiting references	↔
Florida Forever SB 542 – Saunders PCB ENRC 9 – Environment & Natural Resources Council	Creates Florida Forever successor program	<i>Senate</i> – General Government Appropriations <i>House</i> – Environment & Natural Resources Council	↔
Fertilizer Bill HB 1267 – Nelson SB 2352 – Aronberg	Requires adoption of Urban Landscape Model Ordinance for fertilizer use	<i>House</i> – Policy & Budget <i>Senate</i> – Community Affairs	★

★ **Support**

↔ **Monitoring**

↓ **Oppose**

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