



April 18, 2008

In Memoriam

The agricultural community lost a good friend and a strong advocate this week. Tom Kirby, former executive director of the Dade County Farm Bureau, died Tuesday night following a battle with cancer.

Tom remained a passionate and respected voice for the industry throughout his career. He was well-known in legislative circles and maintained a far-reaching network.

Among many other accomplishments, he was instrumental in urging Miami-Dade County to create an agricultural liaison position to better serve the needs of South Florida's farmers and nursery owners. He also co-founded Farm Share, an organization that provides millions of pounds of food to the homeless.

Tom will be remembered not only for his professional achievements, but also for his dedication to his family and friends. He will be greatly missed.

Ag Industry Bill (SB 1376)

On Wednesday, passage of the ag industry bill was delayed in the Senate General Government Appropriations Committee to give interested parties time to work out their differences.

The Florida Association of Counties, Florida Stormwater Association, the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (EPC), officials from Palm Beach County, a commissioner and the general counsel of Leon County, and environmental activist groups attended the meeting in large numbers to oppose two words in the bill: "or enforce."

Currently the Ag Lands and Practices Act states that counties may not adopt regulations which duplicate existing governmental regulations

Many county officials are getting around this provision by claiming that they are not adopting any new rules. They say they are simply enforcing existing ones.

As a result, Farm Bureau and other agricultural associations are attempting to add the prohibition of enforcement to the act.

A second contentious issue is a provision exempting farmlands from stormwater assessment fees or assessments. This is a fairness issue for ag, grounded on the fact that most farmers and ranchers use Best Management Practices to keep water within the boundaries of their land. Some have already paid extensively to handle their own water issues.

Representatives of the ag community met again on Thursday with the various opposing groups in an effort to create a compromise that accomplishes our goal of stopping the duplication of regulations and preventing farmers from paying for stormwater treatment twice.

The bill will be heard again in the Senate General Government Appropriations Committee meeting on Tuesday, April 22.

Farm Bureau members in the districts of Sens. Al Lawson (850/487-5004), Dennis Jones (850/487-5065), Dave Aronberg (850/487-5356), Carey Baker (850/487-5014), Mike Bennett (850/487-5078) and Committee Chair J.D. Alexander (850/487-5044) should call their senators as soon as possible to ask for their support.

SB 1376 is sponsored by Sen. Charlie Dean, R- Inverness.

Budget Update

The House and Senate announced their budget conferees on Wednesday. The conference committees will meet to work out differences between the chambers' individual budgets until Wednesday, April 23. Any issues left unresolved at that time will be sent to the House and Senate Appropriations chairs, Rep. Ray Sansom, R-Destin, and Sen. Lisa Carlton, R-Osprey.

Budget issues for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will be decided by the Ag and Environment Committee, chaired by Sen. J.D. Alexander, R-Winter Haven, and Rep. Stan Mayfield, R-Vero Beach.

Members from the House are Reps. Baxter Troutman, Debbie Boyd, Mary Brandenburg, Rich Glorioso, Denise Grimsley, Will Kendrick, Steve Precourt, Scott Randolph, Tony Sasso, and Trudi Williams.

Members from the Senate include Sens. Al Lawson, Dave Aronberg, Cary Baker, Mike Bennett, Mike Haridopolis, and Dennis Jones.

Budget issues for the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Science will be decided by the Education Committee, chaired by Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, and Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Daytona Beach.

House members are Reps. Trey Traviesa, Thad Altman, Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Marti Coley, Faye Culp, Martin Kiar, Rick Kriseman, John Legg, Charles McBurney, Seth McKeel and Shelley Vana.

Senate members are Sens. Jeremy Ring, Charlie Justice, Jim King and Steve Oelrich.

Lower Prices at the Pump?

Prompted by increasingly high prices at the pump, Governor Charlie Crist is working on a proposal to suspend or reduce state gas taxes during the summer travel season.

The details, such as how much or for how long the taxes would be cut, are still in progress. The proposal, which would save consumers money but cost the state millions of dollars during an already tight budget year, would have to be approved by the Legislature.

A similar cut was made in 2004, reducing the tax by eight cents for one month. The estimated cost to the state was \$60 million.

Energy

The Senate heard its version of the omnibus energy bill on the Floor on Thursday.

As the bill, SB 1544 by Sen. Burt Saunders, has made its way through the process, it has become more consumer-friendly and price-conscious. Several mandates that were expected to increase energy costs significantly have been modified or removed.

The Senate is waiting to take a final vote on the bill until the House version, HB 7135, by the Environment and Natural Resources Council chaired by Rep. Stan Mayfield, is heard. That is expected to happen next week.

Surveyors and Mappers

Legislation dealing with surveyors and mappers authorized to enter private property who willfully and maliciously break down, mar, injure, deface, cut or create an opening gap, interruption or break in fences on agricultural lands continues to move through the House and Senate.

HB 789 by Rep. Will Kendrick, R-Carrabelle, will be heard in its final committee next week.

SB 2054 by Sen. Carey Baker, R-Eustis, passed out of Senate Regulated Industries Committee on Tuesday. It is now in Criminal Justice.





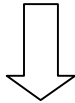


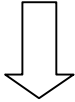
These bills were filed in response to problems that Farm Bureau members have had with certain surveyors

Overwidth Ag Equipment

HB 1255 by Rep. Greg Evers, R-Baker, and SB 1946 by Sen. Carey Baker, R-Eustis, would allow farmers to move overwidth farm equipment within a radius of 50 miles of their farm without a permit.

In light of high fuel prices, farmers have also sought an increase in the current weight restriction of 80,000 pounds to 84,000 pounds. Due to fiscal impacts, that provision has been removed from the Senate bill. It was never contained in the House bill.

SB 1946 passed its final committee on Tuesday. It is now ready to be heard on the Senate Floor. HB 1255 is in the Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council.

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> – Floor	
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> – Policy & Budget Council <i>Senate</i> – Criminal Justice	
Springs SB 2394 – Saunders	Pilot program regulating land uses in springs areas	<i>Senate</i> – Health Regulation	
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> – Floor	
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 HB 7135 – Environment & Natural Resources Council	Omnibus energy package	<i>Senate</i> – Floor <i>House</i> – Awaiting reference	↔
Florida Forever SB 542 – Saunders PCB ENRC 9 – Environment & Natural Resources Council	Creates Florida Forever successor program	<i>Senate</i> – Floor <i>House</i> – Awaiting reference	↔
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> – Environmental Preservation & Conservation	★

★ **Support**

↔ **Monitoring**

↓ **Oppose**

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