

MEMORANDUM

TO: NAIOP
FROM: GrayRobinson
DATE: April 7, 2019
SUBJECT: 2019 Legislative Session – Week Five Summary

The House and Senate approved their spending plans for the upcoming fiscal year shortly after passing the halfway point of the 2019 Legislative Session. The Senate unanimously backed its \$90.3 billion budget one day before the House approved its \$89.9 billion spending plan with only a handful of “no” votes.

Lawmakers in both chambers will now begin conferencing, with the goal of sending an agreed-upon budget to Gov. Ron DeSantis before the planned May 3 end to the 2019 Legislative Session. The Legislature is required to pass a budget each year to submit to the Governor.

Both budget chairs Sen. Rob Bradley and Rep. Travis Cummings appear confident they will be able to work through the \$400 million difference between the spending plans. But there are some stark discrepancies.

The House, for example, wants to sweep \$200 million from the Sadowski Trust Fund, which sends dollars for affordable housing projects to local governments. The Senate, meanwhile, wants to fully fund the coffer.

The Senate has proposed a major increase — \$1.1 billion — in funding for the Florida Education Finance Program, the primary operating pool for the state’s 67 school districts. The House’s proposed increase is about \$520 million less.

The House has moved forward with a series of cuts that are not included in the Senate spending plan, including across-the-board reductions to health care services. It wants to cut by \$39 million inpatient and outpatient Medicaid reimbursement rates. It also wants to cut \$3.7 million in state spending on hospital exemption payments and reduce \$1.9 million currently set aside for health care positions that have been vacant for more than 180 days.

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Those cuts, along with a House plan to reduce university spending, are not included in the Senate budget. As conferencing begins, expect to see compromises from both chambers on these issues.

Activities and Bills related to NAIOP

Lobbying Activities –

Business Rent Tax – The House Ways & Means Committee proposed a reduction in the business rent tax from 5.7% to 5.35%. This is an ambitious reduction and one that demonstrates the efforts of NAIOP and our partners at Florida Realtors, BOMA, ICSC and others. This will “pop” as a proposed committee bill in next two weeks and begin moving towards the House floor.

FAST Act – Our focus is on the Senate to keep the bill moving. Below is a breakdown of next steps needed in order for the FAST Act to reach the finish line this legislative session.

Senate - UPDATE: The Senate Community Affairs Committee has agreed to hear the bill on Tuesday, April 9. This is the first of three Senate committees. We will send out a separate email regarding how NAIOP chapters can engage in supporting this bill.

House: The House bill has made it through two of its three committee references. The final committee is State Affairs. We have every expectation that this bill will be heard in State Affairs within the next few weeks.

Compromise Language: We are actively working with the League of Cities to find language that can still accomplish our goals, yet not be as onerous to the cities. If/when we reach this compromise, the bill will move much easier in the Senate. We will keep you posted on what compromises can be reached.

Lease Signatory Changes – We continue to work with the Florida Bar’s Real Property, Probate, and Trust Law (RPPTL) section on our commercial lease carve out. The House and Senate sponsors have agreed to our language, but we are now finding that the RPPTL Section wants to vet the language. Unfortunately, the RPPTL group has an internal committee process that may push this issue towards a 2020 session review. We are still pushing for inclusion in legislation during 2019 legislative session, but remain focused on how we can also seek consensus with the leading stakeholder on this issue: RPPTL section of Florida Bar.

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Bills of Interest

How A Bill Becomes A Law

As a guide to reading the report below, please reference the following guide to how the Florida Legislature files and passes legislation.

Either chamber (House or Senate) may originate any type of legislation; however the processes differ slightly between chambers.

A legislator sponsors a bill, which is referred to one or more committees related to the bill's subject. The committee studies the bill and decides if it should be amended, pass, or fail. If passed, the bill moves to other committees of reference or to the full chamber. The full chamber then votes on the bill.

If it passes in one chamber, it is sent to the other chamber for review. A bill goes through the same process in the second chamber as it did in the first. A bill can go back and forth between chambers until a consensus is reached. Of course, the measure could fail at any point in the process.

If a bill is passed by both chambers, it is then sent to the Governor to be approved or vetoed. Typically, the Governor has 15 days to act on legislation. If the Governor receives a bill during session, but before Day 53 of Legislative Session, he has seven (7) days to act on the legislation.

Promote Business Friendly CRE Regulations

Permit Fees – SB 142 (Perry) and HB 127 (Williamson) –These identical bills would require the governing bodies of counties and municipalities to post their permit and inspection fee schedules and building permit and inspection utilization reports on their websites; require certain governing bodies of local governments to post their building permit and inspection utilization reports on their websites by a specified date.

Notes: This is the same bill filed last year. If not for Parkland and the ensuing legislation that followed, this bill would have passed.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Innovation, Industry, and Technology; and Rules

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veteran Affairs Subcommittee; Business & Professions Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee

UPDATE: The bill is waiting to be sent to Governor for action.

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STATUS/PROSPECTS: The bill has passed the Legislature. Soon, the bill will be sent to the Governor for action and he will have seven (7) days to act, assuming he receives the bill before Day 53 of Legislative Session. If he receives after Day 53, the Governor will have 15 days to act.

Impact Fees – SB 144 (Gruters) and HB 207 (Donalds) –These similar bills would require that the earliest a government can collect impact fees is the issuance of the building permit for the property. This bill would exempt water and sewer connection fees from the Florida Impact Fee Act. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Notes: This bill is nearly identical to the legislation filed by former Senator Dana Young last session. The addition of the water and sewer connection exemption is new. Also like the Permit Fees legislation, this bill had momentum and likely would have passed if not for Parkland last session.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Finance & Tax; Appropriations

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Commerce Committee; and State Affairs

UPDATE: On Wednesday, the Senate took up the bill on second reading and passed the bill on Thursday. The Senate bill has now been placed on the floor calendar and passed 39-1.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The bill has passed the Legislature. Soon, the bill will be sent to the Governor for action and he will have seven (7) days to act, assuming he receives the bill before Day 53 of Legislative Session. If he receives after Day 53, the Governor will have 15 days to act.

Open and Expired Building Permits – HB 447 (Diamond) and SB 902 (Perry) would provide pro-builder requirements related to open & expired permits, including permit requirements, closing of permits and notice thereof, amendment of Florida Building Code to acknowledge changes, and restrict powers of local governmental entities to close permits. The effective date is October 1, 2019.

House Committee References: Business and Professions Subcommittee; Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; and Commerce Committee.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Innovation, Industry, and Technology; and Rules.

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UPDATE: The House bill was set to be heard in Commerce Committee on Thursday, April 4, but was temporarily postponed. It is expected to be heard next week. The Senate version is waiting for a hearing in its final committee, Rules.

House Version: The House version adopted an amendment in its second committee that would limit the application of this bill to residential. The Senate version remains applicable to commercial and residential. We are working with both sponsors to push for the Senate version.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: Both the House and Senate bills are awaiting their final committee stops. In the House, Commerce committee is what remains. In the Senate, Rules Committee is final destination. Once each bill has passed the final committee, they will be eligible for floor votes. The prospects of this legislation is somewhat in doubt due to the House and Senate versions being so different, at the moment. It is expected they will match up in last committee, but have not yet.

FAST Act – HB 1139 (Plakon) and SB 1752 (Perry) - Requires county or municipality that imposes inspection fees to establish expedited inspection process that provides priority processing for such inspections; authorizes county or municipality to charge additional fee up to specified amount for expedited inspection process; requires such local governments to establish expedited permitting process that provides priority processing for such permits; authorizes local government to charge additional fee for expedited inspection process; provides that local government must require applicant to pay only specified percentage of fees due upon receipt of application; provides for reduction of outstanding fees due; provides for refund of fees; specifies that certain procedures apply to building permit applications for any nonresidential buildings. Effective Date: July 1, 2019

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Innovation, Industry and Technology; and Rules

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Business & Professions Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee

UPDATE: Senate Community Affairs will hear the bill on Tuesday, April 9.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: As discussed above, the bill's prospects rests on whether the Senate will agenda the bill. If so, we can begin to move it through the process.

Electronic Legal Documents – HB 409 (Perez) and SB 548 (Brandes) would authorize online notarizations; specify requirements & standards for performance of such online notarizations; require the Department of State to adopt rules by January 1, 2020. The effective date is January 1, 2020.

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NAIOP Effect: This legislation will serve as the vehicle for changes in the commercial lease witness requirements. Sponsor has agreed to work with NAIOP on potential solutions.

House Committee References: Civil Justice Subcommittee; Transportation & Tourism Appropriations; and Judiciary.

Senate Committee References: Judiciary; Government Oversight and Accountability; and Rules.

UPDATE: The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the bill on Monday, April 1. It is now set for a hearing in Governmental Oversight and Accountability on Wednesday, April 10. The House bill is awaiting a hearing in Judiciary.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The House bill has one more committee stop (Judiciary) before the floor. The Senate will be heard in its second committee this week (Governmental Oversight and Accountability) and will have one stop following that. At this stage, there is plenty of time for the bill to pass, but it must keep moving. The bigger issues, as discussed above, is whether the Florida Bar's Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section will accede to it and our proposed amendment.

Community Redevelopment Agencies – HB 9 (LaMarca) and SB 1054 (Lee) – these comparable bills prohibits a person from lobbying a community redevelopment agency until he or she has registered as a lobbyist with that agency. As well, the House Bill prohibits the establishment of any new CRA after October 1, 2019, unless by a county-wide referendum. Finally, the bill would terminate all CRAs as of September 2039, unless approved by governing body by a two-thirds vote. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veteran Affairs Subcommittee; Ways & Means Committee; State Affairs Committee

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development and Appropriations

UPDATE: The House bill has passed all of its committees and is now ready for the Floor. The bill is on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development agenda for Tuesday, April 9.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The House bill will pass. The Senate bill still has two committee stops and a floor vote. Given the controversy surrounding the bill, it is difficult to say whether it will pass. We rate it as 50/50 odds.

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Florida Building Code Enforcement – HB 715 (Robinson) and SB 1036 (Gruters) – would prohibit local governments from carrying forward balances resulting from its enforcement of the Florida Building Code which exceed the average of its operating budget, not including reserve amounts, for the previous two fiscal years; requiring local governments to use any excess funds to increase services or provide funding to entities designated as not for profit, etc. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Business & Professions Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Innovation, Industry, and Technology; and Rules

UPDATE: The House bill awaits a hearing in its final committee, State Affairs. The Senate bill is up in its first committee Community Affairs on Tuesday, April 9.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The House bill has stalled a bit, but it still likely to move forward towards the House floor. The Senate bill will finally start moving this week, but has a long road ahead. We would rate this bill is 30/70 for pass/fail.

Job Growth Grant Fund - Governor's proposed budget sought renewal of the \$85 million grant fund.

UPDATE: Neither the House nor the Senate budget includes funding for the Job Growth Grant Fund. It is early in the budget process, but this creates a challenge for the Governor to gain these funds.

Deregulation of Professions and Boards – HB 27 (Ingoglia) and SB 1640 (Albritton) - Among many things, these bills reduce the size of the Florida Building Commission, including the removal of the building owners' representative. Effective Date: July 1, 2019

Senate References: Infrastructure & Security; Commerce and Tourism; and Rules

House References: Business & Professions Subcommittee; Government Operations & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; and Commerce Committee

UPDATE: The House Commerce committee passed the bill 18-4 on Thursday. It is now waiting for a floor vote. The Senate Innovation, Industry and Technology Committee passed the bill on Tuesday, April 2. It is now on the Commerce and Tourism agenda for Monday, April 8.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The House bill will likely pass. It is ready for the floor. The Senate version is moving and has two more committee stops. We rate this as 60/40.

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NEW COMMITTEE BILL - Property Development – HB 7103 (House Commerce Committee) - The bill makes changes to property development regulations by:

- Restricting counties and municipalities from adopting or imposing certain mandatory affordable housing ordinances.
- Imposing time limits for a county or municipality to review a development order or permit application and providing procedures for addressing deficiencies.
- Entitling either party of a development order challenge to invoke summary proceedings under s. 50.011, F.S., unless a party shows that summary procedure is inappropriate.
- Expanding the scope of a private provider by allowing services involving the review of site plans and site work engineering plans.
- Reducing the time period building departments have to review a permit application when a private provider approves the plans, from 30 business days to five business days.
- Limiting the building department's authority to audit a private provider to four times annually.
- Prohibiting a building official from replicating plan reviews or inspections performed by a private provider.
- Allowing a person who hires a private provider to petition the court for a writ of injunctive or other equitable relief if the person believes the building department is not complying with the law.

UPDATE: The bill has passed Judiciary Committee 11-7 and is waiting for State Affairs.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The bill has one committee stop before a floor vote. It is likely that it will pass, as this is a leadership bill. The bigger question is whether the Senate will pass a comparable piece of legislation.

Promote Feasible Sustainability Initiatives

Wetland Mitigation – SB 532 (Lee) would allow local governments to provide mitigation credits for a project if alternative mitigation credits are not available from a mitigation bank. In theory, this project would allow local governments and developers to be more creative in approving a project. Another bill, **HB 521 (McClure)** would make clear that the mitigation statute does not affect current wetland mitigation sequencing under state or federal law, and thus, delete all provisions related to the other mitigation regulations. It is unclear whether the two bills will merge eventually, or get their own companions in the respective chambers. We have it tagged and will monitor. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government; and Appropriations.

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House Committee References: Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee; Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee.

UPDATE: Senate bill is now ready for floor. The House bill is on special order calendar for a floor vote on April 10.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: Both bills are now passed through all their committee and ready for floor votes. It is expected that they will pass both chambers and be sent to the Governor.

Renewable Energy on Commercial Buildings – SB 222 (Rodriguez) would exempt from the definition of “public utility” property owners who own and operate a renewable energy source device with a capacity of up to 2.5 megawatts, produce renewable energy from that device, and provide or sell the renewable energy to users on that property. This bill, if passed, would allow large scale commercial buildings to produce and sell renewable energy. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Senate Committee References: Innovation, Industry, and Technology; Infrastructure and Security; Community Affairs; and Rules

House Committee References: No House bill filed yet.

UPDATE: No movement yet.

Promote Fair Taxation

Business Rent Tax Reduction – SB 618 (Perry) would exempt from sales tax the first \$10,000 of total rent in year 2020, the first \$20,000 in year 2021, and continues up to \$90,000 in 2028. This is the same “stair step” approach that Senator Perry has proposed in previous sessions.

Senate Committee References: Commerce and Tourism; Finance and Tax; Appropriations

UPDATE: No movement. Bill has been deferred to the ultimate tax package.

General Taxation – SB 1112 (Gruters) would, among other reductions, cut the business rent tax from 5.7 to 4.2.

Senate References: Commerce and Tourism; Finance and Tax and Appropriations

UPDATE: Now waiting for Finance & Tax hearing.

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Sales Tax on Commercial Property Rentals – SB 1642 (Gainer) – would cut the business rent tax from 5.7 to 5.5.

Senate References: Commerce & Tourism; Finance & Tax; and Appropriations

UPDATE: No movement. Bill has been deferred to the ultimate tax package.

Intentionally Collaborative Growth Management

Affordable Housing Trust Fund – SB 70 (Mayfield) and HB 1103 (Silvers) – The bill would exempt the State Housing Trust Fund and the Local Government Housing Trust Fund from a provision authorizing the Legislature, in the General Appropriations Act, to transfer unappropriated cash balances from specified trust funds to the Budget Stabilization Fund and the General Revenue Fund, etc. If passed, there would no longer be trust fund “sweeps” of the Sadowski Fund. The effective date July 1, 2019.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs; Infrastructure & Security; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development; and Appropriations.

House Committee References: Transportation & Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee; State Affairs Committee; and Appropriations.

UPDATE: No movement yet.

Impact Fees on Affordable Housing – SB 350 (Hutson) and HB 1155 (Plasencia) would prohibit local governments from charging impact fees on affordable housing projects. The effective date is July 1, 2019. No committee references yet.

Senate References: Community Affairs, Infrastructure and Security; and Appropriations.

House References: Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Transportation & Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee and State Affairs Committee.

UPDATE: Senate bill waiting on hearing in Infrastructure and Security. House bill has not yet moved.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: With the House bill yet to move in any committees, this bill is likely dead. The Senate bill could still move and pass, but unlikely with the House bill stalled.

Property Rights Inserted into Growth Management – HB 291 (McClain) and SB 428 (Perry) would require a comprehensive plan to include property rights element; provide

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statement of rights that local government may use; require local government to adopt property rights element by July 1, 2020; and provide that local government's property rights element may not conflict with statutorily provided statement rights. Essentially, this bill, if passed, would make clear that a property owner's rights to develop his/her/its property must be honored by a local government. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Senate Committee References: Community Affairs, Judiciary and Rules.

House Committee References: Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; Commerce Committee; and State Affairs Committee.

UPDATE: House is awaiting agenda for State Affairs. Senate bill is waiting on a hearing in Judiciary.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The House bill has one more committee before the floor. The Senate has two more committee stops before the floor. While this isn't impossible, the House bill has some controversy around it and that may slow it down in the Senate. We rate this as 50/50.

Statewide Environmental Resource Permitting Rules – SB 1344 (Cruz) and HB 1343 (Good) would clarify the duty of the Department of Environmental Protection to adopt, in coordination with the water management districts, specified statewide environmental resource permitting rules; directs the water management districts, with department oversight, to adopt rules for specified design and performance standards relating to new development and redevelopment projects, etc. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Senate References: Environmental and Natural Resources; Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government; and Appropriations

House References: Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee; Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee; and State Affairs Committee

UPDATE: The Senate Environmental and Natural Resources Committee passed the bill 4-0 on Tuesday. It is now waiting for a hearing in Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources. The House bill has not yet moved.

Growth Management – SB 1730 (Lee) would prohibit a county or city from adopting or imposing a requirement in any form relating to affordable housing which has specified effects; would require that a county or city review the application of a development order within 30 days after receipt; and would impose standards surrounding impact fees, including the requirement that they be proportional to the project, have a nexus to the project and not be collected prior to the issuance of a permit.

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Senate References: Community Affairs; Infrastructure and Security; and Rules

House References: No House bill yet.

UPDATE: The Senate bill is on the Infrastructure and Security Committee agenda for Tuesday, April 9. This bill will likely marry up to HB 7103 at some point.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The bill has two committee stops left. The next stop is the sponsor's (Lee) committee. Its bigger issue is finding a house bill to match up with. We rate this as 30/70.

Promote Economic Prosperity

Renewing Visit Florida – SB 178 (Gruters) and HB 6031 (Ponder) would remove the scheduled sunset of Visit Florida's enabling statute and make it a permanent state agency. The effective date is July 1, 2019.

Senate Committee References: Commerce and Tourism; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; Appropriations

House Committee References: Workforce Development & Tourism Subcommittee; Transportation & Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee; and Commerce Committee

UPDATE: Senate bill awaits a hearing on the Senate floor. House bill has yet to move.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: The bill has become one of the trading pieces for the end of session. The Senate wants to renew VISIT FLORIDA and the House speaker does not. It is difficult to say how either will do, as these are presiding officer negotiations.

Workers Compensation – SB 1636 (Perry) and HB 1399 (Byrd) would require panel to annually adopt statewide workers' compensation schedules of maximum reimbursement allowances; extend timeframes in which employees may receive certain workers' compensation benefits & in which carriers must notify treating doctor of certain requirements; provide conditions under which employees may receive permanent impairment benefits; and require good faith effort to resolve dispute. The effective date is July 1, 2019. **Note:** The Senate version addresses attorney fees related to good faith efforts to resolve claims and total amount owed compared to the effective hourly rate.

Senate Committee References: Banking & Insurance; Judiciary; and Rules

House Committee References: Insurance & Banking Subcommittee; Government Operations & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; and Commerce Committee

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UPDATE: Senate Banking & Insurance Committee had placed this bill on the agenda for Monday, April 1, but was temporarily postponed again. The House bill is set for a hearing in the Government Operations & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee on Tuesday, April 9.

STATUS/PROSPECTS: This bill is a leadership priority, but stalled in the Senate. There is concern that the votes are not there to pass it.

Summary of Week Five (April 1-4)

Priorities Take Shape

Senate President Bill Galvano and House Speaker José Oliva have bold goals this Session. Now, they're starting to see them move across chambers.

Galvano wants to pass legislation that would fund three major highway projects. Oliva wants to scale back health care regulations. The Senate this week supported a somewhat-watered-down version of Oliva's repeal (HB 21) of the state's "certificate of need" (CON) process for health providers, which passed the House two weeks ago.

The Senate plan (SB 1256), which had previously been delayed, would eliminate CON for only new hospital construction. Shortly before the Senate moved that bill, Galvano saw his transportation plan for three major highway projects surface in the House.

The proposal would require the Legislature to start saving money to extend the Tampa-area Suncoast Parkway to the Florida-Georgia line, connect the northern terminus of the Florida Turnpike to the Suncoast Parkway, and construct the Southwest-Central Florida Connector between Polk and Collier counties.

Oliva, who let the bill appear in identical language, said it was a "goodwill gesture." Oliva had signaled an apprehension to Galvano's plan because it requires bonds to complete the pricey projects. He told reporters this week that he expects the issue of bonds to be an ongoing conversation.

"The real question is not whether we should bond or not," Oliva said. "It's how careful we should be when we consider doing bonding. And have we made every consideration about the current dollars we have right now."

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"Trade Secret" Bills on the Move

Bills that would establish a uniform public records exemption for "trade secrets" held by state entities appear to be gaining traction in the Legislature. The Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee recently backed two related bills (SB 1414 and SB 1416) that would exempt from Florida's broad public record laws information that holds economic value that is tied to nondisclosure of the information. One of the measures repeals most of the existing trade secret exemptions in current law, replacing it with more uniform language.

The legislation excludes from exemption certain financial details of contract agreements. The push for these measures comes several years after VISIT FLORIDA entered into a contract with the artist Pitbull to film a promotional video highlighting Florida beaches, but resisted efforts by the Legislature to discover details about the contract, claiming they were "trade secrets."

The two Senate bills, sponsored by Sen. Joe Gruters, now head to Governmental Oversight and Accountability.

Issue Roundup

- **Tax Package Formulating** - Tax-cut plans are moving forward in the Legislature, with both chambers again considering tax "holidays." The House Ways and Means Committee workshopped a \$102.4 million tax-cut package that will be heard next week. It includes a three-day back-to-school sales tax "holiday" on clothes, school supplies, and computers and a seven-day tax "holiday" on hurricane supplies. Notably, the plan would also cut the commercial lease tax from 5.7 percent to 5.35 percent.
- **Don't Tax My Diapers** - A Senate panel backed a plan this week to exempt purchases of diapers and incontinence products from the state's 6 percent sales tax. It also forwarded a bill providing a 10-day holiday period in early August in which sales taxes would be lifted on clothes, school supplies and electronics.
- **Texting Ban Moves** - An annual push to pass a sweeping restriction on handheld communications could come closer to reality this year. A House panel backed (HB 107), which would make texting behind the wheel a primary offense. That means officers would be able to pull over drivers if they are texting. It's now ready for the House floor. A similar Senate bill (SB 76) has already passed three of its four planned committees.
- **Autonomous Vehicle Navigates to House Floor** - A bill that would pave the way for autonomous vehicle use is ready for the House floor. HB 311 cleared its last committee stop in the House this week. The legislation further clarifies, removes confusion for, and expands the scope of autonomous vehicle use. A similar Senate bill (SB 932) is still in the committee process.

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Preview of Session Week Six (April 8-11)

The House has two planned sessions next week. The first is at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday. The chamber plans to meet again at the same time Thursday. The House is expected to vote on dozens of bills, including SB 96, which would render targeting or killing a canine used in public safety functions a second-degree felony.

The Senate has just one session planned. That's at 4 p.m., Thursday.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will meet at 4 p.m. Monday to consider implementing language (SB 7086) for Amendment 4, which restored voting rights to certain felons who have completed their sentences.

The Senate session schedule for Week 6 can be found here:

https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Calendar/2019/Weekly_Schedules_2019-03-27_163621.PDF

The House session schedule for Week 6 can be found here:

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=Session&CommitteeId=&Session=2019&DocumentType=Session%20Weekly%20Schedules&FileName=Session%20Weekly%20Schedule%20for%20Week%206%20April%208%20-%2012,%202019%20-%202nd%20Amended.pdf>