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Week One

Governor Bush on Tuesday addressed the Legislature in his annual State of the State address for the last time as Governor, announcing record revenues, record employment and record financial reserves. Among many other initiatives, he outlined his “Culture of Preparedness” initiative, to encourage Floridians to properly prepare for storms, and to prepare to be self sufficient following the storm.

Senior Services Taxing District

SB 1314, the general bill by Senator Rich authorizing counties to create by referendum a Senior Services Taxing District, was heard in Community Affairs this week and passed unanimously. The next stop for SB 1314 is the Senate Children and Families Committee.

Coordinated 311 Nonemergency System

SB 1062 by Senator Diaz de la Portilla establishes a matching grant program to provide funds to local governments for the implementation and operation of a 311 nonemergency and other government services telephone system. Broward County supports this bill, as in many respects the Broward County Call Center is currently functioning as a quasi-311 system. The bill originally provided an initial year appropriation of \$10 million to fund the grant program, but the appropriation was deleted by amendment when the bill was considered and passed this week in the Senate Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee. Funding will hopefully be restored to the bill in the budget process. The Senate bill has one more committee stop, while the House version, HB 661 by Representative Arza, is also making its way through the committee process.

Affordable Housing

Bills have been proposed in the House and Senate to streamline the Community Contribution Tax Credit Program, which provide tax incentives for persons who donate to eligible sponsors of low income housing and community development projects. The bill separates the Community Contribution Tax Credit Program into two programs: the Community Contribution Tax Credit Program and the Homeownership Assistance Contributions Tax Credit Program. HB 821 by Representative Goodlette sets the annual limitation for homeownership projects at \$10 million and the entrepreneurial and job development opportunities for low income persons at \$3 million, resulting in a \$1 million increase in total tax credits available via the programs. HB 821 passed the first of four committees of reference.

Other bills relating to affordable housing include Discretionary Surtax on Documentary Stamps, SB 2450 by Senator Campbell / HB 53 by Representative Smith, and HB 1363 by Representative Davis, which would authorize and fund innovative affordable housing projects for essential service personnel who have up to 150% of median income.



Emergency Preparedness

Both the House and Senate considered emergency preparedness bills this week. SB 528 by the Senate Domestic Security Committee is a combination of bills which includes provisions to: require terminal facilities like Port Everglades and wholesalers to have in place alternate power sources for operation no later than 36 hours after a major disaster; require new construction or substantial renovations to be pre-wired for alternate power sources; require facilities with 16 or more fueling positions within ½ mile of a interstate or evacuation route in counties with populations of more than 300,000 to be prewired for an alternative power source no later than December 31, 2006; require retail facilities with more than ten locations to maintain possession of one generator; and preempts the inspection of the retrofitting to the state division of Emergency Management. A similar bill was workshopped in the House.