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Week Eight

Broward Days

During this critical week, when budget conference, final committee meetings and Broward Days were all on the agenda in Tallahassee, Mayor Wexler, Commissioner Lieberman and Commissioner Eggelton were at the Capitol to assist with the Board's legislative priorities. Mayor Wexler met with the Governor's office to discuss the online travel company (OTC) legislation, uniform port credentialing and budget priorities. The Mayor also met with Sen. Rich and Sen. Geller to communicate concerns with health and human services (HHS) and Library cuts, as well as cost-shifts proposed through a variety of vehicles from juvenile justice to tax reform packages. Commissioner Lieberman met with key House and Senate members on the OTC issue and initiated a media campaign to heighten public awareness of this very flawed tax policy modification. Commissioner Lieberman also testified in the Senate on the potentially negative effects of the proposed changes to the Bert Harris Act, while Commissioner Eggelton testified in support of the \$2-a-day airport rental car surcharge, intended to fund regional transit projects.

Autism

The Healthcare Council revealed Tuesday the Governor's decision to establish a statewide Autism Workgroup to study the issue of insurance coverage and effective treatment of autism spectrum disorders. The Workgroup is tasked with gathering data throughout the year and delivering a final recommendation to the governor by March 2009.

Budget Conference Updates

The Health and Human Services budget conferences occurred Monday, Tuesday and

Wednesday of this week, resulting in three offers from each body and culminating in the House Final Offer Wednesday evening, and an agreement between leadership in both Houses to tap approximately \$300 million of the Lawton Chiles Endowment Fund in order to restore funding to human service programs. Exceptionally positive outcomes in what had promised to be devastating cuts to human services occurred over the three days of negotiations, with several of the most contentious issues being "bumped" up to leadership for further compromise to be reached. Highlights include:

- Full restoration of Hospice funding
- Full restoration of Medically-Needy funding
- Acceptance of the Senate's less devastating reduction to Community Care for the Elderly, with no reductions to Home Care for the Elderly
- Protective Investigator funding has been fully restored
- Healthy Families is fully restored
- Children's Special Health Care is restored

Areas of concern remain, and leadership will be making decisions on the remaining unresolved issues over the next week. Bumped items of particular interest are:

- AHCA/County Health Department funds
- Meds AD waiver (Aging and Disability)
- TANF Adult Substance Abuse funding

The budget must be on Members' desks for consideration 72 hours prior to votes being cast and printing time. In order to Sine Die on Friday evening, all budget issues will have to be resolved by Monday evening.

TWIC/FUPAC

The acceptance of the Transportation Workers Identification Credential (TWIC) as the single port

access credentialing system for Florida was the subject of much discussion and controversy this week. HB 7119 by Rep. Adams would accept the use of the TWIC card, but still require both the federal and state background checks to be performed, adding additional costs and delays to business and workers, and the need for a second access credential. Rep. Ambler filed an amendment that accepted the TWIC card as Florida's port access credential and the federal criminal history check for purposes of §311.12, to both HB 7119 and SB 1992, the proposed DHSMV package. This caused the House to postpone further consideration of both bills. The Governor and Attorney General's offices weighed-in in support of Rep. Adams' bill. Commissioner Lieberman and county staff met with the Governor's policy advisor, who asserted that the bill would create a more secure credentialing system. Rep. Ambler continues to work with representatives of the state's seaports and county staff to obtain a mutually acceptable resolution to the present impasse.

Electronic Sales

Broward and Orange are the only counties where the clerks of the circuit courts do not conduct all judicial sales. HB773 and SB2248 were heard on the floor this week, and were intended to allow clerks to complete judicial sales electronically using newly crafted software. Broward County crafted amendments to the bills permitting our tax collector, which conducts tax deed sales, to utilize electronic sale software and improve efficiency. The amendments passed in both houses on the floor.

Crane Bill

An amendment to limit the preemption in Rep. Evers' CS/HB 609 failed on a recorded vote by a margin of 25 to 86. The amendment, filed by Rep. Zapata, would have allowed counties in high-wind velocity areas (Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties) to enact stricter standards regarding the regulation of Tower Cranes. The bill rolled over to third reading and will likely pass the House on Friday or Monday. However, the legislation appears defeated in the Senate where the bill was not heard in the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

SB 2788 has not been withdrawn from Regulated Industries or its three other committees of reference in the Senate. HB 7141, the House companion measure (originally PCB GEAC 08-20), was filed, but not placed on Friday's special order calendar. This means the House Bill will not be available for floor consideration next week, but could still be filed as an amendment. The House Bill sponsor, Rep. Atkisson, filed the OTC amendments to HB 671, relating to sellers of travel, but eventually withdrew them at the request of Rep. Rivera, the House Rules Chairman and HB 671 sponsor.

Value Adjustment Boards

SB 2080 and HB 909 were both heard on the floor this week. The Broward Delegation did an excellent job of questioning the utility of these bills, while pointing out the unfunded mandates each carries. Both bills change the structure of a Value Adjustment Board to include citizen members and require the use of private attorneys in specified circumstances. Both bills require VABs to use a Special Magistrate (SM) with five years experience and SM training, annually, at counties' expense. Furthermore, in large counties with a multitude of petitions, the appeals requirements proposed create unrealistic timeframes. Unfortunately, even after a healthy debate, both bills passed.

Other Bills of Interest on the Floor

Suspension vs. Termination of Medicaid Health Benefits for Eligible Inmates

SB 1456 was pulled from its last committee of reference and read the second time on the floor, Thursday. The companion, HB 525, has not yet been placed on Special Order.

Expedited Permitting

HB 147 related to expedited permitting for Economic Development Projects was read the second time in the House.

Partial Payment of Property Taxes

HB 51 was read a third time and passed out on a floor vote of 107 to 7.

TRIM Notices

HB 177, which requires additional information to be included in the Truth In Millage Notice, passed

unanimously on the floor, and now goes to the Senate.

Contract Transparency

SB392 has passed and is in House messages, although the House is not expected to take the bill up.