



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

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Transparency and Accountably Bill Passes House Committee

This week, the House Commerce Committee passed HB 3, which will bring greater transparency to local tourism promotion agencies (TPA) and economic development agencies (EDA).

Throughout the state, TPA's and EDA's have shown a pattern of misuse and abuse when it comes to your tax dollars. A few of the much-needed accountability and transparency measures in the bill include: requiring all contracts valued over \$5,000 to be published on the TPA's or EDA's website; requiring all contracts valued over \$250,000 be submitted to the local governing authority before execution and published on their website 14 days in advance; requiring more frequent audits of TPA's and EDA's; and making it a criminal offense to avoid the transparency and accountability requirements in the bill.

I support holding these agencies accountable because I believe anyone receiving public dollars should have complete transparency and always disclose how they are spending taxpayer dollars.

Committee Votes to Reform Community Redevelopment Agencies

The House Government Accountability Committee passed HB 17 to reform community redevelopment agencies (CRAs). CRAs are created by cities or counties to address slum, blight, or affordable housing shortages through redevelopment. The committee found that some CRAs use taxpayer dollars for improper purposes and that all CRAs need better reporting and oversight. The committee also found that cities and counties can already perform many of the same functions as CRAs.

HB 17 would fix these problems by increasing transparency and accountability for CRAs. It would require board members to receive ethics training, require the Department of Economic Opportunity to declare inactive CRAs meeting certain criteria, and require more oversight of each CRA's budget process. In addition, the bill reforms the process for creating new CRAs and would require current CRAs to receive support from a super majority of the governing board of the creating city or county to continue.

Any government program that uses taxpayer money should be held to the highest standards. I support this bill because I believe too many CRAs do not live up to such standards.

Judiciary Committee Advances Property Insurance Assignment of Benefits Reform Bill

The Judiciary Committee passed a bill to address abuses involving agreements that assign the benefits (AOB) of a residential property insurance policy to a third party.



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An AOB is a legal tool that allows a contractor, repair person, or other vendor to “stand in the shoes” of a property owner and receive the proceeds of a property insurance policy for repairs to the covered property. For example, AOBs are sometimes used when homeowners experience water damage and contact a repair person for assistance. Since 2006, the number of lawsuits involving AOBs have risen astronomically, and generally resulted in higher payouts and litigation costs. These increased costs are ultimately paid for by consumers as higher insurance premiums. The bill includes provisions that protect consumers and reduce litigation associated with AOBs.

I look forward to voting for this bill on the House floor because I believe it protects consumers and will help reduce property insurance premiums for homeowners.

Florida House is set to improve our Health Care system

This week, Health & Human Services Committee passed four health care reform bills, all of which will help increase access to affordable and quality health care for Floridians: HB 23; HB 35; HB 37; and HB 41.

HB 23 expands the use and hours of ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) and allows recovery care centers (RCCs) in the state. ASCs are non-hospital facilities that provide surgical care. ASCs have highly skilled staff and surgeons and are less expensive and more convenient than having surgery in a hospital. RCCs provide post-surgical and post-diagnostic, short-term medical and nursing care, support, and pain control for patients that do not require hospitalization. RCCs exist in some states, but not Florida.

HB 35 requires all Florida hospitals and ASCs to complete and publish patient culture surveys. A patient safety culture survey asks employees about patient safety and quality of care in the facility. The surveys help hospitals identify and fix problems. When published, the survey data will also help Floridians make decisions about which facilities are best for their own care and that of their families.

HB 37 helps expand the use of direct primary care (DPC) in Florida by preventing DPC agreements from being regulated like insurance. DPC is a medical practice model that eliminates third-party payers from the doctor-patient relationship. By contract, a patient or employer pays a monthly fee to the primary care provider for defined services. After paying the fee, a patient can use all services in the agreement at no extra charge. One of the most critical problems in healthcare is out of control and unjustifiable costs. Innovations like DPC cut costs by eliminating the administrative hassles of the third-party payer system.

HB 41 codifies the existing Florida Pregnancy Support Services Program (FPSSP), which requires the Department of Health (DOH) to contract with the Florida Pregnancy Care Network (FPCN) to provide pregnancy support services that promote and encourage childbirth, and wellness services. Pregnancy support services are services that promote and encourage childbirth, including direct client services, program awareness activities, and communication activities. Wellness services include services or activities intended to maintain and improve health or prevent illness and injury, including but not limited to anemia testing, assistance with smoking cessation, and screenings for high blood pressure, thyroid functioning, cholesterol, and diabetes. This bill requires that any services provided under FPSSP be provided in a manner that is non-coercive, and may not include any religious content.



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Your Florida House is committed to passing legislation that will increase access to quality and affordable health care for all Floridians.

Florida House Committee Passes Workers' Compensation Bill

After recent court rulings found parts of Florida's workers' compensation law unconstitutional, the Commerce Committee passed a comprehensive bill to address the recent case law, increase rate competition, and provide measured changes focused on system cost drivers. Through the many changes made, the goal of the bill is to ensure the quick and efficient delivery of disability and medical benefits to an injured worker and to facilitate the worker's return to gainful reemployment at a reasonable cost to the employer. The bill is expected to result in significant savings in overall workers' compensation system costs, which will lead to reduced premiums.

I support the bill and think it will improve the state's workers' compensation system for all of those involved.

Florida House Focuses on Businesses and Job Growth

This week, Florida House subcommittees held informative discussions with various Florida business leaders to discuss our state's current business climate.

Business leaders from various industries and professions, ranging from the agriculture and tech industry to contractors and credit unions, offered unique insights into our state's economic environment. Topics of discussion included: the impact of local regulations on business development and expansion in Florida; reducing barriers to entry, lowering taxes and mandatory fees for small businesses; making small business loans more attainable; how to recruit and retain employees; and how to improve relationships with high schools and colleges to expand vocational employment opportunities.

I believe hearing from these panels provided valuable insight into Florida's growing workforce and economy. I look forward to taking the knowledge gained from these business leaders and applying it to policies that will help Florida continue to be a pro-business state.

Florida House Addresses Updates on Medical Marijuana

This week, the House Health Quality Subcommittee received an update from the Department of Health's (DOH) Office of Medical Marijuana Use (OMMU) on SB 8-A, which implements the medical marijuana amendment to the Florida Constitution .

During the update, OMMU informed the subcommittee that DOH is currently developing rules for: Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers (MMTC) license applications, MMTC fines, edibles, pesticide use, MMTC license renewals, labeling and packaging, dosing, and testing laboratory certification.



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Additionally, OMMU provided updates on the number of qualified physicians and patients. Currently, there are 1,066 qualified physicians that can certify patients for medical marijuana, an increase of 19 physicians since the October 11th update, and there are 30,434 qualified patients that can receive medical marijuana, an increase of 10,434 qualified patients since October 11th update.

Your Florida House will continue to ensure that the medical marijuana program is operated securely and safely in our communities.

House Subcommittee passes Military Higher Education Bill

This week, the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee passed a bill that waives certain fees for active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces at Florida College System (FCS) institutions.

Currently, active duty members are reimbursed for tuition through the Military Tuition Assistance program administered by the U.S. Department of Defense. The program is a great resource for military men and women seeking higher education, but it currently cannot be used for materials that are not directly related to course instruction, such as mandatory fees. These mandatory fees include student activity and service fees, capital improvement fees, financial aid fees, technology fees, and access fees. Because of this policy, active duty members incur out of pocket expenses for mandatory fees when enrolling in a FCS institution.

I believe this bill continues our commitment to our service men and women by authorizing FCS institutions to waive any portion of these fees not covered under the current reimbursement program.

I proudly support this bill and any effort to lighten the financial burden for our military members that bravely serve this county.

Florida House Subcommittee Reviews Opportunities for Florida Nurses

This week, the House Health Quality Subcommittee received an update on the state's Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), which was enacted in 2016 by HB 1061.

The NLC is an interstate compact that allows a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse to have a multistate license in their primary state of residency. This allows nurses to practice in multiple states with one license, without having to obtain a license in each state, and clarifies their authority to practice in multiple states via telehealth.

Floridians directly benefit from our state's membership within the NLC, because it increases patient access to care and enables care continuity for patients regardless of their location via telehealth. The compact is also great for nurse military spouses, who would like to practice nursing without having to get a new license every time the military moves their family to a new state.



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Your Florida House will ensure that our state works to advance polices that improve our health care system and create opportunities for our citizens in the health care industry.