

Guest Column
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In Case You Missed It: Concerns Fly As Legislative Session Wraps Up

Melbourne, FL: With only three weeks remaining in regular session, now is the time for our leaders in Tallahassee to work together if they hope to achieve anything meaningful in 2017. Critical issues facing the state of Florida, including skyrocketing workers comp rates, insurance reform to address the issue of "assignment of benefits," education and healthcare funding and oversight, natural resources and ecological infrastructure management, and even oversight of the gambling industry currently seem stalled due to differing positions of the House, Senate and Governor.

Senate President Joe Negron has indicated he is ready to come to the table for negotiations on key legislative issues as well as the annual budget. Unfortunately, the House passed a budget last week which failed to include any funding for Enterprise Florida, the public-private economic development agency that has been central to the success of the Governor's jobs agenda. This singular issue has been at the center of a very public PR battle between Governor Scott and Speaker Corcoran and threatens the productivity of the entire legislative session.

Floridians simply cannot afford for a single issue to again halt the legislative progress like we experienced in 2015, when the debate over medicaid expansion led to dozens of Bills being dropped and a special session called just to pass the budget.

While the Speaker continues to malign Enterprise Florida as "corporate welfare," we here on the Space Coast know it has served as a powerful investment tool that has produced tangible returns for our community.

The entire Space Coast faced collapse of our aerospace and tourism industries when the shuttle shut down coincided with the Great Recession. Space Florida and Enterprise Florida played a critical role in working with our local governments to attract the next generation of commercial space companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin and OneWeb to update and use our aging pads instead of building out new facilities at competing space ports in Virginia, Texas and California.

The same cooperative effort of state and local agencies also resulted in expansions in South Brevard of Northrop Grumman and Embraer, and the retention of the Harris Corporation corporate headquarters. Small businesses up and down the Space Coast have benefitted and grown along side these large corporations, as new employees, their families, suppliers and tourists have moved in along with them.

Business Voice Political Action Committee, Inc. is a political committee organized and existing in accordance with Chapter 617, Florida Statutes, and is an independent, autonomous organization not affiliated with any political party or political organization.

Business Voice engages businesses from across Brevard County and the Central Florida Region to provide a cohesive voice in political advocacy at the State, regional and local levels. Business Voice is operated on a non-partisan basis to promote pro-business candidates and a pro-business legislative agenda.

That said, there is always room for reform. As communities across the nation compete for jobs and present more and more generous incentive packages, administrators must ensure the final offer is still beneficial for the state bottom line. Enterprise Florida may be well served by added oversight and increased private contributions.

With time running out for the 2017 session, the business community implores our local representatives to carry the message of success here on the space coast to the Speaker and Governor, and urge them to find a compromise to fund this powerful economic development tool while increasing public confidence in its management.

And then, we hope they can get to work addressing the long list of other legislative issues that need their attention.

Kathryn Rudloff is the Executive Director of Business Voice Political Committee, an organization that engages businesses from across Brevard County and the Central Florida Region to provide a cohesive voice in political advocacy at the state, regional and local levels. Business Voice is operated on a non-partisan basis to promote pro-business candidates and a pro-business legislative agenda. www.businessvoicepac.com

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