

2020 Weekly Legislative Update - Week 3: January 31, 2020

The House and Senate released initial budget details during week three of the 2020 Legislative Session, providing a glimpse at how they plan to divvy up dollars. As expected, the Florida House declined to fund VISIT FLORIDA or Florida's Job Growth Grant Fund within Enterprise Florida, while the Senate opened the door to negotiations.

Lawmakers continued advancing legislation to further strengthen Florida's business climate, passing Florida Chamber-backed lawsuit abuse reform initiatives, including a measure that would prevent someone from suing you or your business on behalf of your local lake or river (seriously)!

As the Florida Chamber unites business for good, we continue championing your **Florida Chamber 2020 Jobs Agenda**.







OUR GOVERNOR IS TAKING ON POWERFUL SPECIAL INTERESTS.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM WEEK 3:

Your Neighbor Could Sue You on Behalf of Your Local Lake or River?

Not on the Florida Chamber's watch! The high cost of living in Florida's bottom five legal climate means Sunshine State families pay more than $4,442 in "lawsuit taxes" every year. Yet some environmental extremists want Floridians to be able to sue on behalf of Mother Nature, potentially costing families even more. With the Florida Chamber's support, **Senator Ben Albritton** and **Representative Blaise Ingoglia** pushed back against this effort, and advanced legislation that stops his harmful legal doctrine from festering in Florida. The so-called "Rights of Nature" movement won't be the only bad idea that surfaces this year as we try to keep science as the guiding force behind Florida's progress in protecting our natural resources. You can help by **SIGNING THE PETITION** for common sense solutions to solving Florida's current and future water quality issues.

Improving Florida's Legal Climate:

The Florida Chamber continues leading the charge on efforts to improve Florida's bottom five legal climate, joining **Governor Ron DeSantis** and legislative leaders to take on billboard trial lawyers. Lawsuit abuse impacts all Floridians, from job creators to the families that pay more than $4,442 each year in lawsuit abuse



Rep. Jamie Grant Says Constitution Isn't a 'Playground for Politics'.



Sen. Joe Gruters Supports Closing the Internet Sales Tax Loophole

"taxes." Get the latest legislative details on lawsuit abuse reform bills such as **accuracy in damages, contingency fee multiplier,** and **asbestos trust claims** by **clicking here. Be sure to tell us which legal climate issues matter most to you.** **Watch Representative Bob Rommel** explain how lawsuit abuse is costing Florida families more money.

Protecting Florida's Constitution:

The Florida Chamber has a long history of protecting Florida's Constitution from special interest groups who try to buy their way into Florida's foundational document. On the latest edition of the **Florida Chamber's Bottom Line**, **Representative Jamie Grant** explains why Florida's Constitution shouldn't be a "playground for politics." Legislative efforts to protect Florida's Constitution by Representative Grant and **Senator Travis Hutson** both advanced in their respective chambers this week.

Four Constitutional Measures Poised for 2020 Ballot:

It appears a fourth proposed constitutional amendment has secured enough signatures to qualify for the 2020 ballot. The proposed amendment entitled *Voter Approval of Constitutional Amendments* calls for future constitutional amendments to be passed by voters twice before they are included in the Florida Constitution. While it has met the signature threshold, it still must be approved by the Florida Supreme Court before it is officially added to the 2020 ballot.

Florida Wins with USMCA Agreement:

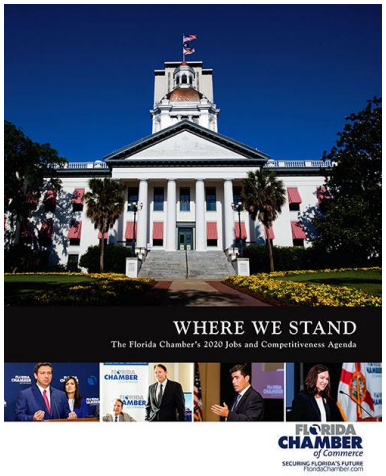
Selling more Florida goods and services around the world is vital to creating jobs, and helping local businesses grow Florida's economy from the 17th largest in the world to the 10th largest. With President Trump's signature, the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) will help preserve and strengthen U.S. trade ties to Canada and Mexico **two of Florida's top six countries for Florida-origin exports.**

Budgets Take Aim at VISIT FLORIDA:

When initial budgets were released this week, as expected, the Florida House declined to fund VISIT FLORIDA or Florida's Job Growth Grant Fund within Enterprise Florida. The Senate, however, opened the door to negotiations, funding VISIT FLORIDA at $50 million and Florida's Job Growth Grant Fund at $20



Rep. Chris Sprowls on the Importance of Protecting Florida's Constitution



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Rep. Bob Rommel Explains How Lawsuit Abuse is Costing Floridians More Money

million. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Economic Development and Tourism this week also passed the VISIT FLORIDA reauthorization bill, which extends the state's tourism marketing arm until 2028. The House has yet to hear the VISIT FLORIDA extension bill. Both legislative chambers proposed $12.5 million for Space Florida – the same level as last year, but remained far apart with respect to attainable workforce housing funding.

Protecting Employee Paychecks:

Over the objections of the AFL-CIO and other unions, a Florida Chamber-backed public sector reform package is advancing in the Florida House. The Florida Chamber believes in protecting government employees from having union dues collected without their consent. **Representative Jamie Grant**, sponsor of HB 1, explains why this is important on the latest edition of the **Florida Chamber's** **Bottom Line**.

Early Childhood Learning:

A quality early education is essential for a child's development, and the Florida Chamber has long-supported ensuring that Florida's future talent has the skills they need for future success. Thanks to **Rep. Vance Aloupis**, **Rep. Erin Grall**, and **Sen. Gayle Harrell,** legislation to improve on the quality, quantity and effectiveness of VPK services for Florida's early learners is advancing through the Florida Legislature.



Lawsuit Abuse Reform will Help Lower the Cost of Living on Florida Families

Chamber Newswire

- Florida Chamber applauds President Trump for signing the USMCA Trade Agreement into law **– American Journal of Transportation**
- Level playing field for Florida retailers **– Gainesville Sun & Ocala Star Banner**
- Florida Roundtable: What's Fueling Florida's Economy **– iHeartRadio**
- E-Verify program sows divisions in Florida Republican Party **– UNIVISION**
- State economists share highs, lows of Florida and Leon County economy at annual forum **– Tallahassee Democrat**
- Pennsylvania and N.J. residents flee high taxes by relocating to South Florida **– The Philadelphia Inquirer**
- Report: Defense industries create 914,787 jobs, $95 billion impact in Florida **– South Dade News Leader**
- Jamie Grant: "Florida's Constitution shouldn't be a 'playground for politics.'" **– The Capitolist**
- Time has come for taxing internet commerce **– Tallahassee Democrat**
- Real-Estate Boom in South Florida **– WIOD, 610 News Radio**

- Uniting the Sarasota business community in the 2020s – Sarasota Herald-Tribune
- Citrus stature grows with each Legislative Day – Citrus County Chronicle
- Forecasters offer up views about Pinellas economic outlook – Tampa Bay Newspapers

Below is a more comprehensive review of legislative activity from Week 3 of the 2020 Legislative Session.

Improving Florida's Talent Pipeline for a Better Workforce



Mastery Based Education

Allows a diversified pathway for students by providing an educational environment that allows students to progress to higher levels of learning based upon the mastery of concepts and skills.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee.



Designation of School Grades

Modifies the high school acceleration component of the school grading model to add to the calculation students who complete career certificate dual enrollment courses resulting in 300 or more clock hours that are identified by the State Board of Education.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.

Passed the House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee.



Early Learning and Early Grade Success

Updates how Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten students are assessed to better identify their needs in the classroom. Additionally this bill seeks to help ensure that all educational instructors meet high academic standards.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Education Committee.

Passed the House PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee.



School Choice

Expands access to Florida students who apply for the Family Empowerment, Florida Tax Credit, Gardiner and Hope Scholarship programs.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the House Education Committee.

Creating Quality Jobs by Diversifying Florida's Economy



VISIT FLORIDA

Reauthorizes VISIT FLORIDA, Florida's tourism marketing organization, which is scheduled to be eliminated on July 1, 2020 without legislative action.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development.

The House did not take action.



Entertainment Industry

Creates a new tax rebate program for family-friendly TV productions, movies and digital media that are produced in Florida using Florida talent.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Regional Rural Development Grants

Provides additional resources and assistance to underserved rural communities to improve economic vitality and encourage economic development efforts.

Florida Chamber Supports

Placed on the Senate Calendar, second reading.

The House did not take action.



Research & Development Tax Credit

Encourages high wage jobs and capital investments by increasing the amount of tax credits available for qualified research and development activities in Florida.

Florida Chamber Supports

[Rep. Pigman Encourages Giving More Floridians Access to Safe, Quality Healthcare]

The Senate did not take action.



Economic Development

Reauthorizes the Qualified Targeted Industry Tax Refund Program, a key economic development initiative that encourages high wage jobs and is set to expire on July 1, 2020 without legislative action; improves access to the program for counties impacted by Hurricane Michael.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.

Preparing Florida's Infrastructure for Smart Growth & Development



High Speed Passenger Rail

Discourages private transportation investment by creating an unnecessary set of state and local regulations in a system that is adequately regulated and preempted by federal law.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Allowing Local Regulations on 5G

Removes Florida Chamber backed legislation that provided a uniform set of rules for the next generation of cellular technology.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Environmental Protection Act

Protects Florida's environmental regulatory structure from a fringe legal philosophy that would grant nearly unlimited standing for frivolous lawsuits

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Passed the House Civil Justice Subcommittee.



Water Quality

This bill better protects the health of our water systems by collecting better data, increasing inspections, and funding septic to sewer conversions.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

Passed the Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Building the Perfect Climate for Business



Motor Vehicle Insurance

Repeals Florida's motor vehicle no-fault law (personal injury protection insurance) and creates mandatory bodily injury coverage.

Florida Chamber Monitoring

The Senate did not take action this week.

The House did not take action.



Fair Settlement

Improves Florida's bottom-five legal climate by addressing Florida's broken bad faith standard.

Florida Chamber Supports

Placed on the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee agenda for February 4.



Contingency Fee Multiplier

Improves Florida's bottom-five legal climate by addressing unnecessary lawsuit costs in property insurance claims due to contingency fee multipliers for attorney fees.

Florida Chamber Supports

On the Senate Judiciary Committee agenda for February 4.

Passed the House Judiciary Committee.



Asbestos Trust Claims

Decreases the gamesmanship in asbestos trust claims by improving transparency and adding notice requirements by the plaintiff within 30 days of a claim being filed.

Florida Chamber Supports

Placed on the Senate Judiciary Committee agenda for February 4.

Passed the House Judiciary Committee.



Damages

Improves Florida's bottom-five legal climate by allowing a jury to see how much is usually paid for medical care versus the amount billed.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the House Civil Justice Subcommittee.



Damages

Defines damages in personal injury cases for past, present or future medicals as usual and customary charges in the community for medical expenses.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Innocent Sellers

Improves Florida's bottom-five legal climate by eliminating vicarious liability for product sellers in a product liability action.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.



Motor Vehicle Dealers

Clarifies that the dangerous instrumentality doctrine, which does not apply to rental vehicles, also does not apply to loaner vehicles when a car is being serviced and certain insurance requirements are met.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Solicitation of Legal Services

Increases health safety by adding certain requirements and disclosures for advertisements that intend to solicit legal services from patients of medical devices and pharmaceuticals.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.



Florida Commission on Human Relations

Florida Chamber Supports

Clarifies that for discrimination complaints before the Florida Commission on Human Relations, the statute of limitations is one year for an aggrieved party regardless of whether the Commission made a reasonable cause determination within 180 days. This fixes a 2000 Florida Supreme Court decision, *Joshua v. City of Gainesville*.

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Minimum Wage

Florida Chamber Opposes

Incrementally increases the state minimum wage to over $15 an hour to the detriment of small businesses and certain employees.

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Discrimination in Labor and Employment

Interferes in employment practices by prohibiting a job creator from requesting or relying on previous wage or salary information to interview, hire, promote or employ an employee.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Prohibited Discrimination Hair

Creates a new cause of action by adding hairstyle to the list of protected classes, such as gender, race or creed, under which it's unlawful to discriminate for housing or employment opportunities.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Unlawful Discrimination - Height/Weight

Creates a new cause of action by adding height and weight to the list of protected classes, such as gender, race or creed, under which it's unlawful to discriminate for housing or employment opportunities.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Pregnant Employees

Interferes in the employer-employee relationship by creating new mandates for employers of pregnant employees.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The House did not take action.



Employment Practices

Creates a new cause of action and interferes with the employer-employee relationship by mandating job creators provide up to three months of paid family leave for the birth, adoption or foster care placement of a new child.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Heat Related Illness

Adds redundant mandates for job creators with employees that regularly perform work outside.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Background Screening (Ban the Box)

Prohibits job creators from requesting information about an applicant's criminal history prior to an initial job interview, regardless of the nature of employment.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Medical Marijuana Employee Protection

Eliminates the ability of job creators to maintain a Drug-Free Workplace by creating a new cause of action against employers that take an adverse action against a person who tests positive for medical marijuana while on the job.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Overtime Pay

Interferes in the employer-employee relationship by mandating overtime pay for all salaried employees earning less than $51,064 a year, regardless of employee class or existing benefit and wage structure.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.



Wage and Employment Benefits Requirements

Encourages a patchwork of burdensome regulations by allowing local governments to set minimum wage requirements and mandated benefit requirements.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Preemption of Conditions of Employment

Prohibits local governments from passing regulations on businesses that interfere with conditions of employment, including wages, scheduling, benefits and background screening.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

Passed the House Local, Federal and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee.



Home Delivery Services

Creates a new cause of action and mandates level II background screenings for the delivery of household goods.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Sales Tax Modernization

Modernizes Florida's tax code and levels the playing field for main street businesses by allowing for the collection of sales tax already due from internet retailers.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Corporate Income Tax

Increases the corporate income tax burden on Florida businesses by eliminating the rate reduction that was provided by the legislature in response to the increased tax base as a result of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Communications Services Tax

Streamlines and reduces the local communications services tax, reducing the tax burden for Florida families and job creators.

Florida Chamber Supports

Placed on the Senate Innovation, Industry and Technology Committee agenda for February 3.

The House did not take action.



Small Business Exemption - Business Rent Tax

Exempts small businesses under a certain number of employees from the business rent tax, the Florida-only sales tax charged on commercial leases.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Corporate Income Tax Combined Reporting

Mandates an affiliated group of corporations with common ownership file a combined water's edge corporate income tax return, which may include income that may not be attributable to Florida.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.



Small Business Saturday

Supports shopping at local small businesses by eliminating the sales tax on purchases on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.



Property Tax Exemptions Used by Hospitals

Treats non-profit hospitals differently for property tax purposes than other non-profits.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The House did not take action.



Litigation Financing Consumer Protection

Protects injured parties from unscrupulous lenders offering high interest rates that hope to take advantage of the lawsuit and draw out litigation in favor of a greater reward that doesn't always make the injured party whole.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

Referred to two House committees. Now in the House Appropriations Committee.



Municipal Litigation

Extends similar attorney fee caps in state litigation to municipal litigation with contingency fee arrangements.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.

Making Government and Civics More Efficient and Effective



Drug and Cosmetic Act

Creates statewide uniformity in the sale of drugs, cosmetics, and sunscreen.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Florida Senate.

Passed the House Health and Human Services Committee.



Sale of Sunscreen

Bans the sale of FDA-approved sunscreen outside of very narrow provisions.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.



Plastic Bag and Plastic Straw Ban

Bans the use of plastic straws and bags statewide.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.



State Funds

Protects the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and makes housing more attainable for Florida families and workers.

Florida Chamber Supports

On Senate Infrastructure and Security agenda for February 3.

The House did not take action.



Collective Bargaining

Removes Florida Chamber-backed reforms.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.



Vacation Rentals

Protects the private property rights of owners by establishing a statewide framework for the use of short term vacation rentals.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Preemption Removal

Removes a Florida Chamber-backed reform that brought a statewide system for food packaging regulations.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



E-Verify Mandate

Mandates a flawed E-Verify system, creating more unneeded regulations without commiserate benefit.

Florida Chamber Opposes

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.

The Senate did not take action.



Paycheck Protection

Protects public sector workers from being automatically enrolled in a union against their wishes.

Florida Chamber Supports

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Constitutional Protections

Protects Florida's Constitution from out-of-state interests buying their way onto the ballot.

Florida Chamber Supports

Passed the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee.

Passed the House Appropriations Committee.

Championing Florida's Quality of Life



Patient Safety Culture Surveys

Requires hospitals to provide specified information & data relating to patient safety & quality measures to patient under certain circumstances or to any person upon request; requires hospitals & ambulatory surgical centers to submit patient safety culture survey data to AHCA.

Florida Chamber Monitoring

The Senate did not take action.

The House did not take action.



Health Care Practitioners

Allows Physician Assistants (PA) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) to practice medicine to the full extent of their education and training.

Florida Chamber Supports

The House did not take action.