



FPF LEGISLATIVE REPORT

April 5-9, 2010



Submitted by: Randy Touchton, FPF Governmental Relations Director

This week was focused on getting both legislative bodies into a conferencing mode. The Senate, on Tuesday, took up all of the House Budget bills and either struck everything after the enacting clause and inserted the language of the corresponding Senate Bill or struck everything after the enacting clause and inserted nothing when there was no corresponding piece of legislation. The House will follow suit, and thus an impasse will have been reached, and a conference committee will be so ordered. Upon that determination, the presiding officers of each body will name their respective conference committee members and Chairmen, and will establish and assign those members to serve on a specific area of the budget conference. As an example, there will be a General Government Conference Committee which will focus on the areas that we are most interested. The Health Insurance Subsidy bill, personnel issues (salaries and benefits), and issues dealing with retirement will be handled by this conference committee. I believe Senator Carey Baker and Representative Alan Hays will be appointed to share the Chairmanship of this conference committee.

House Bill 5607, which was the House version of the FRS employer contribution rate bill, has now become the vehicle for not only that issue but also contains the provisions of Senate Bill 2022 which establishes an employee contribution of .25 of 1%. The House has not passed or considered a corresponding or comparable bill dealing with the employee retirement contribution issue, so this will be the manner by which that issue will go to conference.

House Bill 5701, which abolishes the Health Insurance Subsidy Program, and which the Senate did not have a comparable bill, was amended to include nothing and sent back to the House. So that will be the manner by which that issue will go to conference.

I think we have beaten back the attacks on our retirement systems for this session, by having Representative Zapata withdraw from further consideration his House Bill 1543, and working with the House leadership in blocking the consideration of House Bill 1319 in committee. In the Senate, Senate Bill 1902 by Senator Bennett, has not passed out of the Senate Community Affairs Committee, which he is the Chairman. I am awaiting word from his office as to whether the bill will be on next week's committee agenda. There were a number of our members that traveled to Tallahassee to testify against the bill. The bill was not considered due to the time constraints. Please remember that anything is still possible, and we won't know the final fate of any of these issues, until they officially sine die this session to a close.

If anyone believes that these issues will not resurface next session, you are sadly mistaken. I believe that one of the reasons for our current success is that it coincides with an election year, and that won't be the case next session. In fact, at a meeting which occurred with Senator Bennett this week, he has already set the stage by declaring that he wants to put together a study commission/committee on the retirement issue/issues, or to direct the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Governmental Accountability the task of reviewing the retirement systems. It was this analytical arm of the Legislature, the Florida Tax Watch, and the Florida League of Cities that recommended many of the provisions that were incorporated in the retirement bills introduced this session. Of course, Senator Bennett was quite urging in our participation in this review or study process.

Senate Bill 2232 by Senator Richter that I referred to last week, which would exempt the Florida Guaranty Insurance Association from paying the premium tax for insolvent insurance carriers, was amended to remove that exemption. According to the Revenue Estimating Conference, this exemption would have had a negative statewide impact on the 175/185 plans of approximately \$444,000 annually. We will follow up by having the House Companion C/S for House Bill 159 amended to be identical to the Senate Bill.

Senate Bill 202 by Senator Baker which extends the firefighter death benefit provisions to include those killed in a training exercise was passed by the Senate General Governmental Appropriations by a unanimous vote. Thanks to Senator Al Lawson who presented the bill for Senator Baker in his absence.

C/S for Senate Bill 610 passed the full Senate on Thursday by a 26 – 11 vote including the amendment that exempts Firefighters, EMTs, and Paramedics from the bill’s provisions. The bill would designate Constitutional Office holders (Sheriffs, Clerk of the Courts, Supervisor of Elections, etc.) as the “legislative body” in resolving impasse proceedings/hearings.

Look forward to seeing everyone in Tallahassee next week.

