



FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 13TH-17TH, 2000

Legislature Grieves the Passage of a Veteran House Member

[Rep. Ed Healey \(D-Palm Springs\)](#) one of the longest serving state legislators, passed away Wednesday afternoon after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. AIF sends out its deepest regrets and we will miss his leadership and wisdom in the Florida House of Representatives.

Joint Health Care Meeting in the Senate

The Florida Senate held a Joint Committee Hearing with the [Banking & Insurance Committee](#) and the [Committee on Health, Aging, and Long-Term Care](#). The purpose of this meeting was to solicit testimony from all parties as to the effect of proposed health care legislation.

Since the committee meeting was a workshop format, no votes were taken. Committee staff presented a detailed report on current law and the general effect of certain legislative initiatives. The Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers spoke on how the current health insurance system is broken and the way to fix it is by opening up insurance plans and, to some extent employers, to costly punitive litigation. The health care industry gave a thorough report on the history of HMOs, the current financial status of HMOs, and how new legislative proposals would affect the availability and affordability of a health benefit. They also outlined the appeal and grievance measures that are already in place which provide a subscriber with avenues of redress for coverage denials. Finally, AIF led the testimony of the business community and gave a detailed analysis [of our creative proposal which provides for a wide range of reforms](#). AIF also emphasized that it is very important that employers be heard on this issue because they are the consumers of managed care plans.

House Health Care Issues

The [House Insurance Committee](#) devoted the majority of their meeting this week to discussing the Mandated Health Benefits Interim Report. Chairman [Stan Bainter \(R-Eustis\)](#) and his staff spent the entire summer and fall analyzing the current process that creates mandated benefits which are added to Florida health insurance policies. It is Chairman Bainter's highest priority this session to develop a framework so proposed mandates may be added using sound medical reasoning. In fact, he said that until the House has developed a policy for dealing with mandates, the Insurance Committee would not hear any of the many mandate bills

filed for this session. As part of our health care reform package, AIF has submitted a proposal for reviewing mandates and will be working closely with the Insurance Committee in addressing this issue.

The [House Committee on Health Care Licensing and Regulation](#) passed [Rep. Alex Villalobos' \(R-Miami\) HB 149, HMO Prohibited Contract](#), regarding the use of hospitalists by managed care companies. AIF continues to make progress in getting out the message that the use of hospitalists for inpatient care is a valid cost containment measure. Although the bill passed, it was strongly debated and did receive no votes from [Rep. Lindsey Harrington \(R-Punta Gorda\)](#) and [Rep. Everett Kelly \(R-Tavares\)](#) and [Jim Tullis \(R-Jacksonville\)](#). AIF and other industry representative agreed that they would work together with the sponsor of this legislation to develop language that will satisfy all of the parties involved.

In House Health Care Services Committee

AIF worked with [Rep. Manuel Prieguez \(R-Miami\)](#) on [HB 399, Newborn Hearing Screening](#), to develop an amendment which allows a doctor to choose additional screening tests which the insurance plan will cover. The bill was passed by the committee.

Elections Bills – Presidential Primary

The [House Committee on Election Reform](#) voted unanimously to pass **HB 1527, Presidential Preference Primary**, by [Rep. Willie Logan \(D-Opa Locka\)](#) to move Florida's Presidential Preference Primary to the last Thursday in January beginning in the election year of 2004.

Florida's lack of a voice in determining the presidential nominees of the parties has disenfranchised many registered party voters. This year's nominations were decided prior to the March 14 primary because enough delegates were chosen in other states before Florida voted.

AIF supports the effort to bring Florida voters and businesses a voice in determining the nominees of each party for President.

Forecast for Next Week

AIF will again face more health care mandate issues next week, the first being SB 164 *Insurance for Autism Spectrum Disorder*, by [Sen. Jim Scott \(R-Ft. Lauderdale\)](#). AIF lobbyist will urge committee members to embrace AIF's proposal to send all health care mandates to an estimating conference to determine the cost of each proposed mandate before it can be debated by the legislature.

AIF will also be monitoring the progression of the Florida Statewide Building Code, [SB 4, Florida Building Code Exemption](#), by [Sen. Mario Diaz-Balart \(R-Miami\)](#).

Stay tuned to our daily brief and to our web site at www.fbnnet.com as the legislature makes some very important decisions on the state's economy. These decisions will have a major impact on the business community and AIF will be reporting to you everything that happens.

This report was prepared by Curt Leonard, Manager – Governmental Affairs at Associated Industries of Florida (AIF). Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850)224-7173.

- For more information on all of the important legislative information concerning the business community, go to our “members only” Florida Business Network web site at <http://fbnnet.com>
- Send us your E-mail address and we will begin to send this report to you automatically via E-mail.