

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA  
**LEGISLATIVE  
DAILY BRIEF**



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### **AIF Supports Funding for Charter Schools Growth**

Through miscommunication and oversight, a budget issue of great importance to AIF is on the cusp of turning tragic. 26,000 students enrolled in charter schools for, what would be on the government's calendar, the 2000 – 01 fiscal year. The Florida Department of Education projects an additional 50,000 will be enrolled for the 2001-02 fiscal year. Including the expansion of existing schools and new student station construction for early, middle and high school students, the “one-fifteenth” Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO), which is government-speak for a funding formula that decides how much money an entity should get, the charter schools will need \$47 million for the 2001-02 school year.

The funding formula, actually written in law, of “one fifteenth” of PECO's student station construction, provides \$850 per elementary student, \$1000 per middle school student and \$1,300 high school student. The current funding provided in the budget provides for fully funding the 26,000 student stations at \$20 million. However, what is needed is \$47 million for the additional 50,000 students coming into the charter school program.

The Department of Education originally underestimated the number of students that would need to be funded under the charter schools program. Department Secretary Charlie Crist has amended the Department's request to increase the budget amount to \$47 million. Unfortunately, the train seems to have left the station. The budget wheels are turning and the correction has neither shown up in the Senate or House budgets. This is despite the fact that the charter schools enjoy broad and bipartisan support. House and Senate leadership and rank and file members of the House and Senate have all enthusiastically expressed their continued support for the charter school effort. Almost unbelievably, even with the Education Secretary's support, House and Senate support, the lone documents, the budget bills, that decide the fate of the charter schools, sit unchanged with only \$20 million earmarked for funding.

First, we advocate emphatically that the \$47 million be provided for the charter schools. For the future, AIF recommends and supports efforts to move charter school funding out from the General Revenue budget and into a recurring state budget-funding source. We also prefer such funding be bonded. Hair-raising episodes such as this where the wrong numbers were simply implemented, are no way to fund or expand an educational program that is enjoying great success and support from all corners.

**AIF and its 10,000 employer members strongly support the continued development and growth of the charter schools effort. Many of AIF's members have plans or have openly expressed interest in supporting and setting up charter schools. Charter schools provide an outstanding opportunity for employer recruitment and retention of employees. These charter school endeavors are efficient, effective and can be placed on or near an employer's facility. Charter schools present an opportunity that is genuine and should not be left in a terrible situation due to a simple budget oversight.**

## Today's Update

We have been reporting on the Court Reform (**HB 367**) and Civil Service Reform (**HB 369**) bills all this week, and today full House took a vote on these bills.

**CS/HB 367** will make the Governor responsible for making all appointments to Judicial Nominating Commissions. The Governor now appoints three members, the Florida Bar three members and those six select three more members for each commission. "These are the people's judges, not the Board of Governors of the Florida Bar's judges," said the bill's sponsor, *Rep. Fred Brummer (R-Apopka)*.

**AIF supports the bill as an important reform to a court system that is drifting further and further into the role as arbiter of what is good or bad law, instead of simply evaluating the constitutionality of law as set forth by the by the legislature and the will of the people.**

**HB 369** that members said will give state government a dose of small business to work harder and give better treatment to taxpayers. It will allow managers to dismiss employees who are performing poorly and give bonuses to those who perform well. Members found the present system that takes 45 to 60 days to hire someone and more than a year and lots of paperwork to fire an underachiever unsatisfactory.

**AIF supports these politically bold reforms. Florida's civil service employee system must move into the 21st Century to meet the demands of this growing and dynamic state. Any reforms that encourage creative thinking, initiative compensate employees competitively and aggressively are to be encouraged. Our brightest lights are seeking employment elsewhere. These reforms promise to stop the hemorrhage**

In the debate, opponents expressed hope that the bills would be derailed in the Senate, as certain House passage was obvious.

Republican support held firm on **HB 369** as it passed 74-43, however, nine Republicans shifted to the opposition on **CS/HB 367** on judges. They were Reps. *Nancy Argenziano, Crystal River; Jeff Atwater, North Palm Beach; Michael Bennett, Sarasota; Marty Bowen, Winter Haven; Larry Crow, Dunedin; Paula Dockery, Lakeland; Frank Farkas, St. Petersburg; Heather Fiorentino, New Port Richey; and Sandra Murman, Tampa.*

House Democratic Leader *Lois Frankel* despairingly said the House hit a trifecta as it also passed a bill to give \$3,000 vouchers to pupils to transfer from crowded schools.

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

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