

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
WEEKLY UPDATE**



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**FROM SPECIAL SESSION 'D'
FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 2-5, 2002**

Almost unbelievably, the House and Senate adjourned sine die today without coming to a final agreement on the Florida School Code Rewrite.

Conference committee members, charged with negotiating the differences between the two chambers, actually did come out with a "compromise" bill for consideration this morning. However, one provision in the bill proved controversial to members of the Senate. The controversial language in question attempted to codify several court cases related to religious activities in public schools, to clarify or provide guidance to local school boards on what was and what was not permissible on school properties. Several Senators found this language objectionable, exceeding or extending the proscriptions for religious activities actually provided for by the courts.

The Senate did attempt to offer a further compromise on this particular issue. However, the House, perhaps tired and irritated, simply chose to vote on the conference "report" or bill and approved it by a vote of 74 Yeas and 37 Nays. The House, taking a "take or leave it" stance, then adjourned sine die. The Senate was left with a conference committee bill without Senate "Leadership" willing to do anything to get the votes. The same Senate President that employed scorched earth politics to pass his "tax reform" plan simply let the Senate and a week's worth of additional work dissolve into disarray. So the Senate then adjourned sine die.

What this means is that in addition to special sessions to address the budget and the statutory implementation of the new Cabinet position of Chief Financial Officer, the Legislature will have to return to take another stab at rewriting the Florida School Code. The Code must be rewritten and adopted by July 1, 2002, when the new K – 20 "seamless" education system goes into effect. It is likely that the school code issue will be folded in with one of the other two special sessions.

As we reported last night, it is likely that the Governor will call for a special session on the budget for the week of April 22 through the beginning of May.

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.

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