

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
DAILY BRIEF**



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GOVERNOR SUPPORTS IMPORTANT BUSINESS ISSUES IN THE STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

The Legislative Session opened today amid the usual pomp and floral circumstance.

The highlight of the day, of course, was Gov. Jeb Bush's state of the state address, his fifth. In his speech, the governor spoke strongly in support of two key issues for Florida's employers.

The following are excerpts from the address that illustrate Gov. Bush's understanding of and commitment to reform.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

"I urge you to pass a workers' compensation reform package that reflects the good work completed by our task force. We should increase benefits for injured workers as they are recovering. We should establish a process that expedites - rather than delays - medical treatment. We should also ensure that medical experts - not lawyers - diagnose injuries and direct care."

AIF supports the governor's position. The Legislature must take action this year to increase worker benefits and reduce litigation expense. Promoting greater fairness and efficiency in the system is necessary to curtail escalating costs for the business community.

MEDICAL LIABILITY

“Make no mistake: medical malpractice is very serious. Physicians, nurses, hospital workers, and other providers should be held to the highest of standards, and those who commit negligence should be held accountable. But under our current system, less than half of the premium dollar even goes to the victim, after the lawyers, witnesses, taxes, and administrative costs are paid.

“That’s why I favor comprehensive medical malpractice reform modeled on the work of the academic task force composed of university leaders. We should improve quality, monitor outcomes, and discipline providers who commit negligence.

“We should also enact a \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages. This cap will limit runaway verdicts and prevent more talented and dedicated caretakers from leaving our state.”

AIF supports the governor’s position. Health care providers in Florida are facing a medical liability crisis. Vulnerability to large jury awards is why insurers have left the state. Many doctors, especially in the high risk specialties, are leaving too. A \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages is necessary for meaningful and lasting relief.

Stay tuned to our daily brief and to our web site at www.fbnet.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.

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://fbnet.com>
- Send us your E-mail address and we will begin to send this report to you automatically via E-mail.