



2023

A Year in Review



The Voice
of Florida
Business
Since 1920

2023 A Year in Review



ABOUT AIF

Known as “The Voice of Florida Business” in the Sunshine State, Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) has represented the principles of prosperity and free enterprise before the three branches of state government since 1920. A voluntary association of diversified businesses, AIF was created to foster an economic climate in Florida conducive to the growth, development, and welfare of industry and business and the people of the state.

A not-for-profit association, AIF is owned by its members, which hail from every corner of the state and represent every segment of Florida’s private sector. Through AIF, they join together to ensure that the principles of economic liberty get a fair hearing before the state’s elected officials, Supreme Court justices, and executive agencies.

Every project undertaken by AIF is guided by one simple idea: **The good fortune of our state hinges on the**

prosperity of our state’s employers. AIF works to lessen the burdens government would place on employers, while seeking solutions to conditions that threaten their success.

OUR MISSION

Every employee and our Board of Directors work every day to achieve these objectives for our members:

- **To promote and support policies that protect and support Florida employers.**
- **To vigorously protect our members from harmful policies that inhibit their ability to run their businesses.**
- **To be forward-thinking and in constant pursuit of new and innovative ideas that will continue to move the business community toward success to enhance the general welfare and prosperity of the common wealth of Florida as a whole.**



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As Chairman of the AIF Board of Directors, it has been my honor to help lead this organization in its mission to continue to be the most impactful voice in the state capital for employers in Florida. The Board is made up of some of the finest business minds in the state. The men and women who volunteer their time as a Board member do so because, like me, they believe and support the efforts of AIF.

Why is AIF considered the leader in Florida on advocating for the business community for over 100 years? Because it stays true to its original mission that the founders set in 1920. A no-nonsense fearless voice that draws a line in the sand defending its members regardless of whether it is popular or not. No fluff, no half-way efforts, no seeking the easy way out on tough issues to appease those that disagree with our position.

When you are a member of AIF you can count on these things:

- AIF's efforts are impactful to the success of your business.
- AIF relishes standing on the front line and defending Florida's employers.
- AIF's reputation is second to none when it comes to on the ground battles in the Capitol.

If you are a member, thank you for being part of this great organization. If you are not a member, I encourage you to ask around to those who know who is really effective and those who aren't. Then come sit down with AIF leadership and find out how you can be part of the exciting things going on at AIF.

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read 'José Gonzalez', is written over a white background.

Chairman
José Gonzalez

José Gonzalez, Chair AIF Board of Directors
Director, Government & Industry Relations
Disney Parks & Resorts



2023 A Year in Review



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

As we review our efforts in 2023, I am proud of the great work that our staff, Board of Directors and partners have accomplished. At the same time, I am full of excitement about where AIF is headed and what we can accomplish for our members.

I hope you will take a few moments and review this publication as we walk through the myriad of activities and efforts we took on behalf of our members. You will notice that everything we do is member centric, in that our priority is to always ensure that every effort supports the employers in Florida. After all, it is their stellar effort, day in and day out, that keeps our economy going.

We engage with our members through advocacy, political and our Foundation. We do this through various meetings and events throughout the year, as this publication outlines.

This was a big year for AIF with our political efforts. We announced a brand-new means to enhance the ability of our members to engage in the political process. In August, we announced the creation of The Center for Political Strategy within AIF.

AIF's Center for Political Strategy is a culmination of listening to the needs of our members and Florida's top employers. Their desire was for a robust, complete, and

comprehensive political entity that could improve the political landscape for the business community.

We have answered that desire with the creation of The Center. Working jointly with Association partners (regional & statewide), corporate leaders, and business political groups, the goal is to ensure that pro-business candidates, Republican or Democrat, are elected to the Legislature so that legislation which supports employers, not harm them, can be achieved.

On the advocacy side, it is our policy councils, made up of our members, that push the final agenda that we will support during the legislative session. The summer Policy Retreat, a new event held in June (see page 10), had the sole purpose of sitting with members and hearing from them on how various business issues affect their companies.

In summary, 2023 was a year filled with efforts to further our mission to continue to educate, support and promote the welfare of our members.

Brewster B. Bevis
President & Chief Executive Officer

OUR 2023 SPONSORS

On the following pages, you will see information on all the various meetings and events we held throughout the year. These events would not be possible without the support of our partners and sponsors.

Our sponsors' commitment helps to further support AIF's mission on behalf of our members across the state.

2023 A Year in Review

SETTING THE BUSINESS AGENDA

Members' Voices are Heard

Early in the year, AIF's policy councils began to meet to help set the agenda for the Legislative Session.

AIF councils allow members to take a leadership role in public policy issues that affect their companies.

Over the last 15 years every major issue of concern to our many companies has been addressed through the success of the AIF policy councils and their broad reach across many industries.

Rick Murrell, CEO of Saltchuk Logistics

Rick Murrell, CEO of Saltchuk Logistics and Co-Chair of the Transportation & Maritime Council, leads the discussion.



AIF Vice-President of Governmental Affairs, Adam Basford, leads the discussion in one of AIF's policy council meetings.



Policy council members gather to discuss AIF's legislative priorities for 2023.

MEMBER POLICY COUNCILS

Environmental Sustainability & Agriculture Council

Energy Council

Financial Services Council

Health Care Council

IT Council

Manufacturing, Aerospace & Defense Council

Taxation Council

Transportation & Maritime Council

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

Florida Business Forum on Tort Reform

AIF held its 3rd Florida Business Forum in Tallahassee on February 13, 2023. The Forum brought together AIF members, key associations, and corporate leaders to discuss tort reform, a significant, ongoing concern for all employers.

Sen. Doug Broxson (R-Pensacola) provides his thoughts on the tort issue.



Industry representatives, lawmakers and business leaders served as panelists, moderators, and speakers to discuss key components of tort reform and how it impacts the business community.

Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) was a key speaker at the 2023 Florida Business Forum.



One of the final panels of the 2023 Florida Business Forum focused on the speculative lending problem in Florida.



2023 A Year in Review

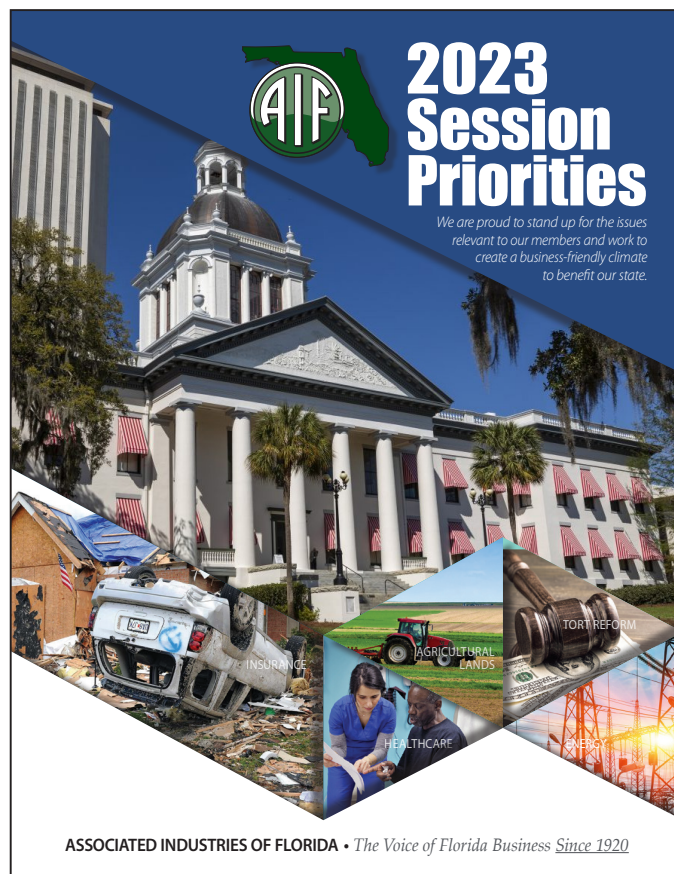
RELEASING OUR PRIORITIES

In March of 2023, after collaborating with our members and Board of Directors, we released our *2023 Session Priorities*.

The issues laid out in detail within the publication summarize the guiding principles which shaped AIF's 2023 legislative positions and are what AIF's Advocacy Team worked diligently to support.

For more than 100 years, AIF has been the go-to organization for business advocacy in Florida. The AIF team has perfected driving collaboration amongst employers to deliver massive legislative wins for the business community.

José Gonzalez, Director, Government & Industry Relations at Walt Disney Parks & Resorts



Follow Us on  @VoiceofFLBiz

STAFF



Brewster B. Bevis
President & Chief Executive Officer



Adam D. Basford
Vice President – Governmental Affairs



J. Tanner Warwick
Legislative Assistant

2023 ADVOCACY TEAM



Slater Bayliss
The Advocacy Partners



Leslie Dughi
Metz, Husband & Daughton, PA



Melissa Joiner Ramba
Floridian Partners



Jorge Chamizo
Floridian Partners



Cory Guzzo
Floridian Partners



Steve Schale
The Advocacy Partners



Chris Chaney
The Advocacy Partners



Ashley Kalifeh
Capital City Consulting



Stephen W. Shiver
The Advocacy Partners



Chris Coker
Coker Consulting



Andy Palmer
Metz, Husband & Daughton, PA



Jim Spratt
Magnolia Strategies



Jon Costello
Capitol Strategy Group



Toby Philpot
Floridian Partners



Sarah B. Suskey
The Advocacy Partners



Charles F. Dudley
Floridian Partners



W. Mark Powell
Capitol Advisory Group



Jeff Woodburn
The Advocacy Partners

KEY VICTORIES DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Moving Florida's Legal Climate from Hellhole to Point of Light (HB837/SB1002/HB761)

Florida has had a long history of being described as a "judicial hellhole." However, after historic reforms during the 2023 Session, Florida has now been described as a "point of light" by the American Tort Reform Foundation. This significant reversal was due to the passage of several pieces of legislation that were the lynchpin of AIF's lobbying efforts in 2023.

Supporting Affordable Workforce Housing

Senate Bill 102 was named the "Live Local Act" and is designed to take significant steps to address Florida's backlog of affordable workforce housing in the state.

It also will encourage private sector investment to accelerate new workforce housing construction through creating new partnerships, creating a new sales tax refund on building materials, and providing additional incentives.

Tax Initiatives

House Bill 7063 was a comprehensive \$1.3 billion tax package that contains many provisions that benefit Florida businesses. This bill:

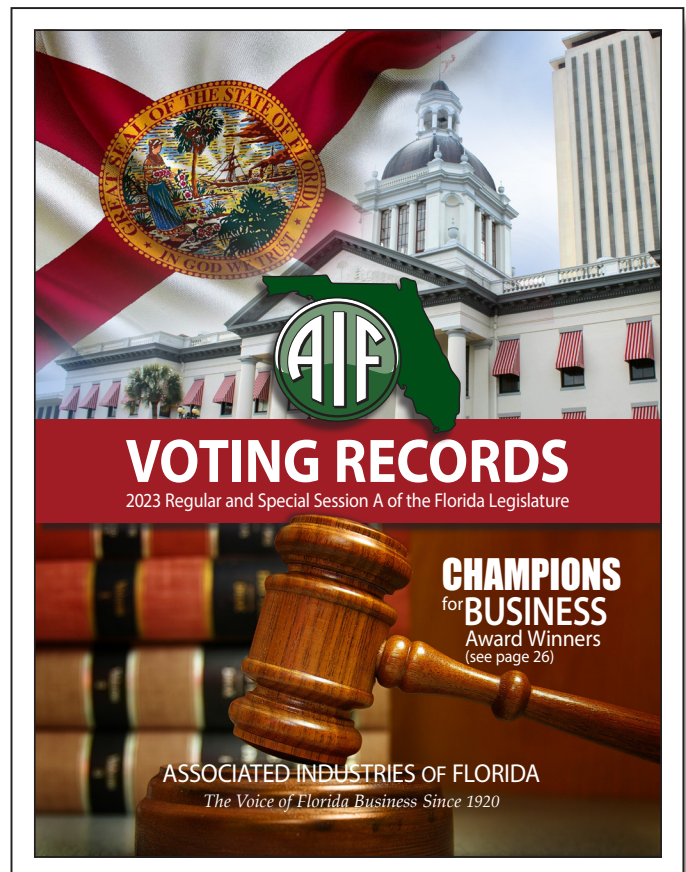
- provided a decrease in the tax rate on the retail sale of communication services,
- reduced the business rent tax from 5.5% to 4.5%,
- provided a sales tax exemption for equipment used in the production of renewable natural gas,
- extended sales tax exemptions on natural gas fuel taxes,
- prohibited local governments from applying special assessments on agricultural lands, and
- provided a permanent sales tax exemption on agricultural fencing.

Local Ordinances

Senate Bill 170 creates accountability for local governments in their regulation of businesses. It requires local governments to produce a "business impact estimate" prior to passing an ordinance, requires local governments to suspend the enforcement of ordinances when they are challenged, as well as allow courts to award up to \$50,000 in attorney fees to a prevailing plaintiff who successfully challenges an arbitrary or unreasonable ordinance.

The AIF Voting Records is a critical tool for companies to determine which legislators are truly supportive of the business community.

BillieAnne Gay, Director, State Government Affairs
Anheuser-Busch



Voting Records Released

In early May, AIF released the 2023 *Voting Records* publication, which covered the 2023 Regular Session and Special Session-A. By reporting on the 3,813 votes cast by legislators on 42 bills, this publication embodies the most exhaustive and complete record of the Legislature's approach to the concerns of Florida's employers. For over 45 years, the *Voting Records* have been the go-to source for Florida employers when analyzing how the Florida Legislature voted on key business issues.

2023 A Year in Review

AIF SUMMER POLICY RETREAT

Members Meet on Issues

In June 2023, just a few weeks after the legislative session ended, AIF held this inaugural event in St. Pete Beach to allow us to review the results of the Session with our members and continue the discussion on key issues. Seven of our policy councils held breakout sessions during this event.

Special Speakers

Members were thrilled to welcome special guest speakers State Attorney General Ashley Moody, Duke Energy CEO Melissa Seixas and Senator Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota).

AIF convenes important voices in Florida to discuss critical topics within the business community. We are proud to be part of such a distinguished group.

Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy's state president in Florida

Florida Attorney General
Ashley Moody



Sen. Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota)



Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy, speaks to members at the 2023 Policy Retreat.





HONORING EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT



Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) receives her 2023 Champion for Business award.



Rep. Tommy Gregory (R-Lakewood Ranch) receives his 2023 Champion for Business award.

AIF and the business community recognized these six legislators who provided outstanding support on critical issues important to our members during the 2023 Session:

Senate President Kathleen Passidomo

House Speaker Paul Renner

Senator Travis Hutson

Senator Linda Stewart

Representative Tom Fabricio

Representative Tommy Gregory



A Champion for Business is a legislator who takes a stand for his or her belief in the free-enterprise system, who defies the status quo when it is harmful to our state's competitive climate, and who faces down opponents to the growing prosperity of Florida's citizens.

Visit [AIF.com/CFB](https://aif.com/CFB) for a complete list of past AIF Champions for Business winners.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

In August, AIF welcomed members to its 2023 Annual Conference in Orlando. There were several panels of speakers on key business issues such as: Artificial Intelligence, Rural Broadband Expansion and Insurance reforms.

With both key business leaders and several Florida Legislators as part of the conference, the information provided was timely and impactful.



Rep. Ryan Chamberlin (R-Ocala) and Rep. Vicki Lopez (R-Coral Gables) speak with members at the Annual Conference.



Rep. Will Robinson (R-Bradenton)

The AIF Conference is one of my favorite events to attend because it is there that I know I will hear interesting concepts on what is really impacting Florida's businesses.

Rep. Vicki Lopez (R-Coral Gables)



AIF Vice-President of Governmental Affairs, Adam Basford, introduces a panel at the Annual Conference.



AIF Board Chair, José Gonzalez, welcomes members to the 2023 Annual Conference.

In preparation for the 2023 Legislative interim committee meetings in Tallahassee in the fall, AIF staff meet with the various policy councils to once again hear from members on their 2024 priorities.



John Browning, Vice-President of New Projects at The Goodman Company, leads the discussion in the Transportation & Maritime Council meeting.

2023 A Year in Review

THE CENTER FOR POLITICAL STRATEGY

A big moment at the Annual Conference was the announcement that AIF created **The Center for Political Strategy**.

AIF's Center for Political Strategy is a culmination of listening to the needs of our members and Florida's top employers. Their desire was for a robust, complete, and comprehensive political entity that could improve the political landscape for the business community.

The goal is to ensure that pro-business candidates, Republican or Democrat, are elected to the Legislature so that legislation which supports employers, not harm them, can be achieved.

The Center Hits the Ground Running

Almost immediately after being announced, The Center began its work by doing both a statewide poll and several strategic polls in key legislative districts to find out how Florida's voters are feeling on both key issues and political candidates.

The Center also held a focus group in December to meet a cross section of Florida voters and discuss their opinions on issues and candidates.



What we are doing here at AIF in the political arena for our members is practically unparalleled in any other state. **This is not a short-term plan. The Center has a long-term vision for the business community's political efforts.**



Staying in-the-know on Florida politics is no longer an every other year effort. New data, shifting demographics, and Special Elections all require Florida businesses to be educated on the very latest information all year, every year.

AIF Vice-President of Political Operations, Jeremy Sheftel, discusses a statewide poll with council members.

The Florida Business community was in dire need of a comprehensive and focused political effort on behalf of employers and AIF has met that need with the creation of The Center for Political Strategy.

Adam Babington, Vice President,
External Affairs, Walt Disney World

Keeping Members Informed in Florida Politics Through the Political Council

As a part of The Center for Political Strategy, one of the main roles of the Political Council is to hold statewide candidate interviews and have multiple briefings throughout the year. In 2023, multiple briefings were held which allowed our political team to keep members updated on key political topics such as polling, shifting demographics, candidates, and the upcoming 2024 election cycle.

2023 A Year in Review

The Florida Water Forum

In November 2023, the 13th Annual Florida Water Forum was held. The issues surrounding water and environmental policy are of critical importance to the future of Florida. **Our business climate, ability to grow as a state, and our quality of life are all directly tied to the availability and sustainability of our water resources and a healthy environment.**

Rep. Randy Maggard (R-Zephyrhills) moderating the Potable Reuse panel.



Sen. Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) previews the 2024 Legislative Session.



Few issues are tougher than water in the Sunshine State, and AIF's Water Forum brings together Florida's policy makers, business leaders and those who truly care about making Florida the best place to live and do business. From discussions and presentations to conversations in the halls, the AIF Water Forum is an invaluable resource for the betterment of our state."

Andrew Walmsley, Director of Legislative Affairs,
Florida Farm Bureau

Rep. Bobby Payne (R-Palatka) receives the Adam Putnam Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing him for excellence in water policy for Florida's business community.



Top Level Sponsors' Networking Fish Fry

Chairman's Circle



Business organizations who participate at the top level of our sponsorships came together with key legislators for a casual networking event.

2023 A Year in Review

Session Briefing

Due to an early start for the 2024 Session, AIF held its Session Briefing in December 2023. The Briefing has become a must-attend event for the business community as it allows our advocacy team to highlight upcoming key issues with members and hear from key legislators.

Sen. Linda Stewart (R-Orlando) receives her Champion for Business Award.



Rep. Toby Overdorf (R-Stuart)



Rep. Stan McClain (R-Ocala)



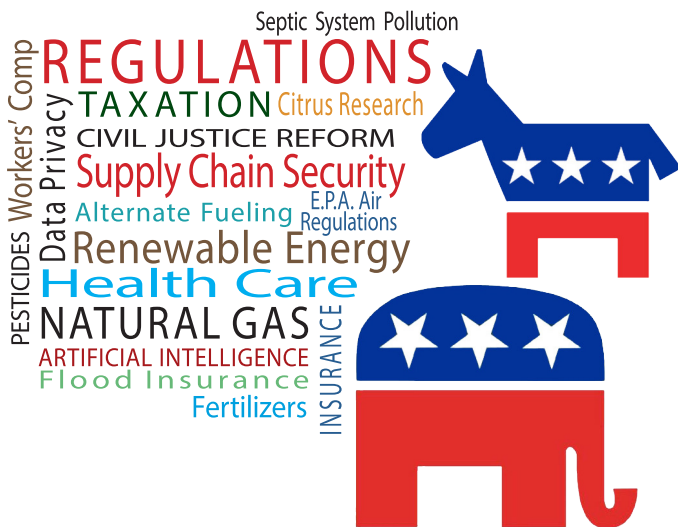
Looking Forward in 2024



The Center for Political Strategy

CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Candidate Interviews allow our members the opportunity to meet the many new faces running for office around the state and to begin their working relationship with those being elected to office.



Summer Policy/Political Retreat June 4 - 5 • Hammock Beach Resort

This family-friendly retreat provides members a low-key environment to have post-legislative session and pre-primary election discussions and planning.

Fall Policy/Political Retreat October (TBD)

Leading into the 2024 General Election and the 2025 Session, this event will provide timely and key information for participants.

FLORIDA Water Forum 2024

December (Dates TBD)
(Location TBD)

The 2024 Annual Florida Water Forum is a unique opportunity to discuss the issues surrounding water and environmental policy that are of critical importance to the future of Florida.

AIF will email notices to members updating the dates, venues and agendas through the year.

2023

A Year in Review

Associated Industries of Florida



516 North Adams Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32301



850.224.7173



aif@aif.com



AIF.com



@VoiceofFLBiz