

WEEKLY TALLAHASSEE UPDATE



Flying through the third week of the 2024 Florida Legislative Session, this week the House and Senate will release details of their proposed budgets for Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025. That means the first of many committee hearings regarding the 2024 - 2025 budget. The Florida Constitution requires that the legislature pass a balanced budget each year.

For the past few years, the Florida Chamber has made a priority of advocating for improving Florida's bottom-five ranking legal climate. [SB 1726 Access by Insureds to Claim-related Documents](#) sponsored by Senator Martin and [HB 1179 Litigation Financing](#) sponsored by Representatives Gregory and Overdorf have been identified as legislative priorities of the Florida Chamber. The identified issue involves investors or hedge funds that fund civil litigation in exchange for a percentage of the judgement or settlement. Current Florida law allows foreign and domestic entities to essentially invest in Florida's legal system without transparency. Both of these bills aim to "provide transparency and accountability to ensure that our Florida legal system operates efficiently and that if foreign or domestic entities are funding litigation in Florida for a return on investment, that it happens in the sunshine, and not in the shadows." The bills also include language for "consumer protections to ensure funders do not receive a larger percentage of the settlement than the plaintiff or have the ability to steer the outcome of the litigation."

[SB 248 Medical Negligence](#) sponsored by Senator Yarborough has passed the Senate Judiciary committee 8 to 2 and will head to the Fiscal Policy Committee. The bill aims to reinstate non-economic damage caps for medical negligence claims. The Florida Legislature had previously adopted a non-economic damage cap, which "limits the maximum amount paid for non-economic damages, such as pain and suffering, which are paid above and beyond economic damages. This per-claimant non-economic damages cap will help address Florida's highest in the nation medical malpractice insurance costs, encourage physicians to practice in Florida, while also protecting existing individual providers from losses that may drive them out of Florida or the healthcare system entirely." According to the Florida Chamber, Texas implemented a non-economic damages cap in 2003 and has since seen a 46% decrease in medical malpractice insurance premiums.

[HB 635 Child Care and Early Learning Providers](#) sponsored by Representative McFarland passed unanimously through the House Ways and Means Committee, and will have two more committee stops before heading to be heard on the floor of the House. [SB 820 Child Care and Early Learning Providers](#) by Senator Grall also passed unanimously through its first committee and has two more stops before heading to the Senate floor for a vote. These bills aim to "incentivize businesses to assist employees with the cost and availability of childcare while also reducing regulations on providers that drive up costs without improving safety or quality."

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[SB 812 Expedited Approval of Residential Building Permits](#) sponsored by Senator Ingoglia passed the Senate Community Affairs Committee unanimously 8 to 0 and will head to the Regulated Industries Committee. The bill "requires local governments to issue a certain number of permits once a temporary plat has been approved so that developers can begin building in new subdivisions while awaiting final approval." This bill has been supported by the Florida Chamber because they believe building homes without unnecessary delays will reduce costs and encourage more development to meet the needs of Florida's growing population.

[SB 1260 Verification of Reemployment Assistance Benefit Eligibility](#) sponsored by Senator Trumbull has passed through the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee. The bill "ensures stewardship of taxpayer dollars paid by businesses by instituting verification tools and additional guardrails to prevent fraud in Florida's Reemployment Assistance program, and provides assistance and tools to Floridians who are unemployed to match them to potential employment that match their skills and training."

Thank you for your interest in reading this week's legislative update. If you have any questions or requests, please send those to the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce.

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Public Policy Chair

Sources:

www.FLchamber.com

www.FLsenate.gov

www.myFloridaHouse.gov