

THE Insider



THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S POLITICAL ADVOCATE NEWSLETTER

Special Edition 5

April 12, 2021

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THE INSIDER - SPECIAL EDITION LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE WEEK 6

Last week, both the House and the Senate passed their respective budget plans. The Senate's spending plan totals \$95 billion while the House plan comes in at \$97 billion. Additionally, Florida is expected to receive \$10.2 billion from the federal coronavirus relief effort, and those negotiations will begin this week.

The legislature also revised its controversial plan to direct the Sadowski Fund towards multiple projects - with only one-third ultimately planned for affordable housing. The new plan will put **\$200 million** towards affordable housing, a higher funding level than typically achieved and will stop the sweep of the affordable housing trust fund, while also addressing sea level rise and wastewater infrastructure. This proposal is now headed to the Governor's desk for approval.

Lastly, CFHLA continues to monitor all of the legislative issues important to the Industry; including the long-term continuation and funding of **VISIT FLORIDA**, a bill that would preempt the regulation of **vacation rentals** in the State of Florida, and **updates to the Gaming Compact**.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX (TDT)

CALL TO ACTION

Tell our Central Florida House Representatives to vote **NO** on this bill that will harm tourism!

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A bill in each chamber that proposes changes to the [Tourist Development Tax \(TDT\)](#) statute that would require a county to renew its existing TDT via referendum every five years. Additionally, any new pennies levied would also be required to be approved by referendum.

[HB 1429](#) - *Representative Avila* - placed on **Special Order Calendar** for Tuesday, April 13th.

[SB 2008](#) - *Senator Diaz* - **Awaiting hearing** in Community Affairs Committee after being Temporarily Postponed on March 30th.

CFHLA OPPOSES

VISIT FLORIDA

A bill in each chamber that authorizes the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation (**VISIT FLORIDA**) to roll over unspent appropriations into succeeding fiscal years. The bill would also remove the sunset date in VISIT FLORIDA's enabling statute.

Additionally, Governor Ron DeSantis recently stated his intentions to award VISIT FLORIDA an additional \$50 million - for a total of \$100 million - to support the agency in 2021.

[SB 778](#) - *Senator Hooper* - **No action taken** in the Senate last week.

[HB 675](#) - *Representative Plasencia* - **No action taken** in the House last week.

CFHLA SUPPORTS

IN-STATE TOURISM MARKETING

A proposed appropriations project of **\$2 million** will be used for an In-State Tourism Marketing Campaign to drive visitation to the State of Florida.

[HB 3645](#) - *Representative Williamson* - **Awaiting hearing** in the House Appropriations Committee. Status of this appropriation will be dictated by the budget conferencing process.

CFHLA SUPPORTS

VACATION RENTALS

A bill in each chamber that requires advertising platforms, such as **AirBnB** and **VRBO**, to remit specified taxes imposed on some

transactions. It also requires all licenses issued by the Division of Hotels & Restaurants of DBPR to be displayed conspicuously. Additionally, these bills would preempt regulation of vacation rentals to the State of Florida, which would prohibit local law, ordinance, or regulation from allowing or requiring inspections or licensing of public lodging establishments.

SB 522 - Senator Diaz - The Senate bill was amended on March 11th by deleting provisions preempting control to the state, allowing current local laws governing vacation rentals to stay as they are, thus preserving some local control. CFHLA supports the preservation of local control in the **Senate version** of this bill. On Rules Committee agenda on **Wednesday, April 14th**.

HB 219 - Representative Fischer - Currently awaiting a hearing in House Ways & Means Committee after being **temporarily postponed** from the March 22nd agenda.

CFHLA SUPPORTS AMENDED SB 522

GAMING COMPACT

During Week 5 of the Legislative Session, the Senate gave Governor DeSantis an outline detailing a new gambling deal with the **Seminole Tribe of Florida**. The deal would generate more than \$1 billion in recurring revenue for the state and more details are expected to follow from Governor DeSantis later this week. Since May 2019, the Seminole Tribe had officially ceased payments to the State due to continued concerns surrounding the gaming authorized in pari-mutuel facilities and the perceived lack of state enforcement.

The three bills being proposed would serve to establish a "Florida Gaming Control Commission" under the Office of the Attorney General, ensure proper regulatory controls to support the economic growth of the gaming industry, and allow pari-mutuel permit holders to allow wagering to take place without requiring a live competition aspect.

CFHLA MONITORING

COVID-19 LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

On Monday, March 29th, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the COVID-19 Liability Protections bill into law.

CFHLA SUPPORTS

IN THE NEWS

[Visit Orlando president says 'it's time to be optimistic' about tourism in Central Florida.](#)

[1 year into pandemic, Orange County tourism tax dollars back on the rise after taking dip in January.](#)

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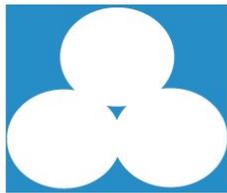
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