With only two weeks left in the 2021 Florida Legislative Session, both chambers have now turned their attention to the state budget. Beginning late last week and throughout the weekend, legislators remained in Tallahassee to conduct sub-committee hearings and begin resolving their budget differences.

Additionally, tomorrow will mark the 50th day of the 2021 Legislative Session, which is the last chance for any bills to be heard in any of the House and Senate committees. After the 50th day, all committee meetings will come to a halt as legislators shift their focus on passing the state budget.

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, workforce housing and updates to the Gaming Compact.
Last week, the Florida House released a new tax package that includes provisions that addresses the Tourist Development Tax. This change would require that all new or increased tourist development and convention development taxes must be approved by referendum and to finance flood mitigation projects. This House tax package includes the same language from HB 1429 and SB 2008 - the companion House and Senate bills that are opposed by CFHLA.

HB 7061 - Representative Payne - Passed Ways & Means Committee on April 16th, added to the Calendar to be heard on the House Floor.

SB 7068 - The Florida Senate has filed its own version of the tax package that does not include any revisions to the TDT.

CFHLA OPPOSES THE CHANGES TO THE TDT IN THE HOUSE’S TAX PACKAGE

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX (TDT)

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. Language from these bills has been added to the Tax Package presented in the House.

HB 1429 - Representative Avila - Passed on the House Floor by a vote of 114-2.

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, the Florida House has proposed to fund VISIT FLORIDA on a year-by-year basis, while the Senate is holding firm on plans to keep it funded annually at $50 million.

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 - Status of this appropriation will be decided in 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 the Rules Committee agenda for tomorrow, Tuesday, April 20th.

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

CFHLA SUPPORTS THE AMENDED SB 522

WORKFORCE HOUSING

Last week, the Florida Legislature approved SB 2512 and the bill is now headed to Governor DeSantis for his consideration. This bill will reduce the percentage of money that'll go towards affordable/workforce housing and funnel $200 million (versus $423 million) towards affordable housing projects. The remaining dollars will now be used for issues such as sea level rise and septic-to-sewer wastewater conversion systems and this total is up from nearly $140 million in the original SB 2512 bill.

CFHLA MONITORING

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 three bills being proposed in the Senate and the two companion bills in the House, 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.

The bills advanced amid ongoing negotiations between the state and the Seminole Tribe. Senate President Simpson has even hinted at the possibility of a Special Session to address the gaming compact.

SPB 7076/7078/7080
HB 7073/7075

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

Unemployment Is High. Why Are Businesses Struggling to Hire?

Jerry Demings hopes to lift Orange County’s mask mandate by June

Universal Orlando picks developer for new affordable housing development

Senate holds firm on keeping VISIT FLORIDA funding recurring

Similar to restaurants, hotels also struggle to find workers

Vaccine passport ban clears committee along party lines

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