THE INSIDER - SPECIAL EDITION

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

WEEK 5

Last week, Governor DeSantis officially signed the first bill into law from this legislative session. SB 72, which was a top priority of CFHLA this session, takes effect immediately. This retroactive and proactive bill establishes COVID-19 liability protections for businesses and healthcare providers from frivolous COVID-19 related lawsuits (that do not provide clear and convincing evidence).

Additionally, the Governor issued an executive order to ban the use of "vaccine passports" by businesses or local governments in the state of Florida. This order, is consistent with the Governor's approach to the virus and its impacts on Florida from the onset.

Furthermore, we'd like to extend a thank you to all of our CFHLA members who contacted the Senate Community Affairs Committee Members and expressed their opposition to SB 2008. This bill had proposed changes to the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) and CFHLA, along with FRLA and our tourism industry partners, stood in strong opposition to these changes. On Tuesday, the bill sponsor TP'd (Temporarily Postponed) the bill and it appears to not be on track for passage. This was a Big Win for our tourism and hospitality community.

Lastly, both Chambers are readying to pass their spending plans this week and preparing them for conference. The Senate has proposed a
$95 billion budget, while the House has proposed a $97.1 billion budget. Highlights include $625 million towards water quality and funding VISIT FLORIDA at $50 million.

However, there continues to be a major concern within these respective budgets. CFHLA has been consistent in its belief that the Florida Legislature should utilize the Sadowski Trust Fund for its intended purpose - to provide resources and opportunities for Floridians to obtain affordable housing. Legislative leadership is currently proposing to permanently divert two-thirds of the affordable housing trust fund to other projects. This proposal goes against Governor DeSantis' first budget outline and we will be monitoring this issue moving forward.

CFHLA continues to monitor the progression of other bills that are important to the Industry; including the long-term continuation and funding of VISIT FLORIDA, a proposal that would preempt the regulation of vacation rentals in the State of Florida, and updates to the Gaming Compact.

VACCINE UPDATE

Starting TODAY, all individuals aged 18 and older are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

This action is a major milestone in the fight against COVID-19 in the state of Florida and CFHLA applauds the action taken by Governor DeSantis, to expand vaccine access as we continue on the road to recovery.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX (TDT)

THANK YOU to all of our CFHLA members who contacted the Senate Community Affairs Committee Members and expressed their opposition to this bill. On Tuesday, the bill sponsor TP'd (Temporarily Postponed) this bill and it appears to not be on track for passage.

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 - Passed State Affairs Committee by 21-2 vote on March 29th and placed on Calendar for a second reading on the House Floor.

**SB 2008** - Senator Diaz - Bill hearing scheduled in the Community Affairs Committee on March 30th was temporarily postponed last week.

CFHLA OPPOSES

COVID-19 LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

On Monday, March 29th, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the COVID-19 Liability Protections bill into law.
This legislation provides the minimum requirements for a civil action based on COVID-19 related claims, including providing a statute of limitations and burden of proof.

**HB 7 - Representative McClure** - Last week, the House voted and approved the Senate version (SB 72) by a vote of 83 - 31.

**SB 72 - Senator Brandes** - The Senate approved this legislation by a vote of 24 - 15, on March 18, 2021.

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**CFHLA SUPPORTS**

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**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.

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**CFHLA SUPPORTS**

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**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.

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**CFHLA SUPPORTS**

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**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 to preserve local control. CFHLA supports the preservation of local control in the Senate version of this bill. Currently awaiting a hearing in its final committee assignment.
HB 219 - Representative Fischer - Currently awaiting a hearing in House Ways & Means Committee after being temporarily postponed from the March 22nd agenda.

CFHLA MONITORING

GAMING COMPACT

During Week 4 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.

CFHLA MONITORING

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