THE INSIDER - SPECIAL EDITION

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

WEEK 3

During the third week of the 2021 Legislative Session, Governor Ron DeSantis outlined his desires for spending the roughly $4 billion Florida received from the "American Rescue Plan" signed by President Biden earlier this month. Highlights from those plans include $150 million for the Job Growth Grant Fund, $73.2 million for the state's unemployment system, and an additional $50 million for VISIT FLORIDA (this is in addition to the $50 million already included in the Governor's proposed State budget).

CFHLA continues to monitor the progression of bills that are important to the Industry; including legislation that shields businesses from COVID-19 lawsuits, the long-term continuation and funding of VISIT FLORIDA, and a proposal to expand the use of the Tourism Development Tax (TDT).

VACCINE UPDATE

Last week, CFHLA, along with Visit Orlando and the I-Drive Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to Governor Ron DeSantis, urging him to include Hospitality workers in the next round of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. The good news is that starting TODAY, any individual aged 40 and above is eligible to schedule an appointment at the Orange
County Convention Center to receive their COVID-19 vaccine, and all Seminole and Osceola County residents aged 50 and above are now eligible for vaccination.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX (TDT)

CALL TO ACTION - SB 2008 proposes to expand the approved uses of TDT - an action that could significantly reduce resources needed, now more than ever, to attract visitors to our region. Make your voice heard by contacting the Florida Senate Community Affairs Committee and let them know why this legislation will hurt your business and the entire Hospitality Community.

CONTACT SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A bill in each chamber proposing 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 unanimously through the Environment, Agriculture, and Flooding Subcommittee on March 15th.

passed unanimously in Ways and Means Committee TODAY, March 22nd

SB 2008 - Senator Diaz - No action taken in the Senate last week.

CFHLA OPPOSES

COVID-19 LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

A bill in each chamber that provides minimum requirements for civil action based on COVID-19 related claims including providing a statute of limitations and burden of proof.

HB 7 - Representative McClure - No action taken last week. The House will potentially vote on the Senate version of the bill this upcoming week.

SB 72 - Senator Brandes - Senate version passed last Thursday, March 18th.

CFHLA SUPPORTS

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 - Passed unanimously by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development
last week. Awaiting hearing in its final committee assignment.

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 that will be used for an In-State Tourism Marketing Campaign to drive visitation to the State of Florida.

HB 3645 - Representative Williamson - Approved unanimously by the State Administration & Technology Appropriations Committee. Currently awaiting a hearing in its final committee assignment.

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 - An amendment to the bill was proposed to remove provisions preempting regulations to the state and allow current local laws to remain in place. CFHLA supports the passage of this proposed amendment. Currently awaiting a hearing in its final committee assignment.

HB 219 - Representative Fischer - No action taken in the House last week. Hearing in Ways and Means Committee POSTPONED.

CFHLA MONITORING

GAMING COMPACT

Last week, the potential for a gaming deal with the Seminole Tribe of Florida being negotiated in 2021 increased. 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

IN THE NEWS

Senate Passes COVID-19 liability protections as legislature
reaches deal

Orange County Convention Center to lower vaccine age to 40

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