

THE Insider



THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S POLITICAL ADVOCATE NEWSLETTER

Special Edition 3

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THE INSIDER - SPECIAL EDITION LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE WEEK 4

Halfway through the 2021 Florida Legislative Session and we have some good news to share. On Friday, the Florida House voted 83-31 to approve [SB 72](#), which was a top priority of CFHLA this session. This bill establishes **COVID-19 liability protections** for businesses and healthcare providers and the bill is on its way to Governor DeSantis.

Additionally, the House and Senate have now rolled out their initial budget proposals. The Senate proposed a \$95 billion budget on Friday and the House proposed a \$97.1 billion budget on Saturday. Highlights include \$625 million towards water quality and funding VISIT FLORIDA at \$50 million.

However, there is one 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 develop quality affordable housing for the constituents of Florida struggling to find adequate living arrangements. This past week, legislative leadership introduced a plan that would direct two-thirds of the Sadowski Trust Fund for other uses, including septic-to-sewer conversions and mitigating the effects of flooding and sea level rise. This proposal goes against Governor DeSantis' first budget outline and we will be monitoring this issue moving forward.

Lastly, 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 to expand the use of the [Tourist Development Tax \(TDT\)](#), and the [Gaming Compact](#).

VACCINE UPDATE

CFHLA applauds Governor Ron DeSantis's action to expand COVID-19 vaccinations to those 40 years of age and older starting **TODAY** and all adults 18+ beginning next **Monday, April 5th**. As we stated in our letter to the Governor on March 12, hospitality and lodging employees have remained on the front lines of this pandemic for over a year. By ensuring that all employees are now eligible, we will be able to promote the safety of our destination to millions of eager visitors and help give confidence to our workforce in order to return to work, as soon as possible.

Thank you Governor DeSantis for your support and we look forward to our industries rebounding stronger than ever before.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX (TDT)

****CALL TO ACTION****

Tomorrow, the Senate Community Affairs Committee has placed SB 2008 on its agenda. This proposed legislation would expand the approved uses of TDT - an action that could significantly reduce the resources needed, now more than ever, to attract visitors to our region. Please make your voice heard, by urging the members of the Florida Senate Community Affairs Committee to **VOTE NO** on this legislation, that will harm our Tourism and Hospitality Communities.

**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](#) - Committee Substitute approved unanimously on March 22nd.

[SB 2008](#) - *Senator Diaz* - On Community Affairs Committee Agenda for **TOMORROW**, March 30th.

CFHLA OPPOSES

COVID-19 LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

On Friday, the Florida House voted 83-31 to approve SB 72 and the bill is on its way to Governor DeSantis.

A bill in each chamber that provides 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* - The House voted on the Senate version (SB 72) this week.

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

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** 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.

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 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* - This bill was scheduled to be heard in the House Ways and Means Committee last week, only to be postponed without explanation.

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

IN THE NEWS

[Vaccine eligibility expansion could help Florida's economy](#)

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