THE INSIDER - FINAL SPECIAL EDITION

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

WEEK 9

During the final week of the 2021 Legislative Session, several of CFHLA’s leaders traveled to Tallahassee, on behalf of the organization, to meet with our legislators and advocate on behalf of the Hospitality and Tourism Industries. These leaders included:

- CFHLA Board Chairman Jesse Martinez
- CFHLA PAC/PC Chairman Jay Leonard
- CFHLA President/CEO Robert Agrusa
- CFHLA Public Policy Director Madison Youngman
- CFHLA ARC Liaison to the PAC/PC Boards Jackie Bozzuto

And Representatives from each of our Central Florida Theme Parks including Melanie Becker of Universal Orlando Resort, Michelle Brady-Palmer of SeaWorld Parks and Resorts, and Leticia Adams of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts
Furthermore, on Friday, April 30th, the **2021 Florida Legislative Session** officially adjourned sine die at 2:41 p.m., passing a historic **$101.5 billion budget**. So far, Governor DeSantis has signed 7 bills from the 2021 Legislative session into law, and he will have 15 days to act on each of the bills, once they are presented to him by the Florida Legislature.

Additionally, the Florida Legislature will convene again the week of May 17th for a **Special Session** to address the newly negotiated **2021 Gaming Compact** with the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

CFHLA would like to thank its members for their continuous efforts in keeping our elected officials informed on where the Tourism and Hospitality Industries stand on these important issues. As a result, another proposed expansion to the **Tourist Development Tax** was rejected, **VISIT FLORIDA**'s funding was increased to $75 million, and the **COVID-19 Liability Protections** bill was signed into law.

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**VISIT FLORIDA**

In the final version of the budget sent to the Governor, **VISIT FLORIDA** was funded at **$75 million** for FY 2021-2022. This is a **$25 million increase from last year** - a true testament to the invaluable work that **VISIT FLORIDA** accomplishes by attracting new visitors each year to our destination.

However, this level of funding is not recurring and will need to be approved again next year. Additionally, CFHLA will continue to advocate for the removal of the agency's sunset provision (2023) in Florida State Statute.

**CFHLA Supported the Increase of $75 million in VISIT FLORIDA Funding.**

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**TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX**

A bill in both the House and Senate was filed to 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.

Although the House version of the bill passed on the floor, the Senate bill stalled in the committee process. Additionally, we'd like to thank **Senate President Wilton Simpson** and **Appropriations Committee Chair Kelli Stargel** for supporting the Senate’s version of the tax package and thwarting a last-minute attempt by the House, to include this harmful TDT language within the 2021 tax package.
CFHLA Opposed This Harmful TDT Language and it was once again saved in 2021.

COVID-19 LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

CFHLA supported the passage of this extremely important legislation for businesses, and on Monday, March 29th, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the COVID-19 Liability Protections bill into law.

TO-GO ALCOHOL

A bill authorizing certain food service establishments to sell or deliver certain alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption. This bill also helps to increase the opportunity for lodging properties of varying sizes to earn additional revenue through the sale of alcoholic beverages. CFHLA supported this legislation that passed during the 2021 Session.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

During this year’s legislative session, a proposal was offered to divide the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund into three separate allocations. This proposal was opposed by CFHLA, along with many others from across the state.

A compromise was ultimately reached that would allocate $200 million in funding this year - towards affordable housing projects - and the Legislature ensured that there would be no future raids on the affordable housing trust fund.

VACATION RENTALS

Early in the Legislative Session, a bill was proposed in the House and the Senate which would require advertising platforms to collect and remit taxes and adopt anti-discrimination policies statewide. The House version of the bill included language which would restrict local governments from imposing particular regulations specific to their communities while the Senate version omitted this preemption language. CFHLA Supported the Amended Senate bill, however both bills ultimately stalled in the committee process and did not pass during this session.

CFHLA expects to continue considering this issue, with other stakeholders, in the months to come.

WATER QUALITY

Water quality and environmental projects were a major priority for the Florida Legislature this year.

In addition to the significant allocations for water quality projects from septic-to-sewer conversions and Everglades Restoration, several Central Florida projects were prioritized in the budget - notably an appropriation by Senator Jason Brodeur, which would study the sources of the sedimentation within the Little Wekiva River and detail water quality improvements that could be achieved.
GAMING COMPACT

A new proposed 30-year Gaming Compact, estimated to generate $2.5 billion of new revenue for the state over the next five years, has been negotiated between Governor DeSantis and members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The Florida Legislature will convene again the week of May 17th for a Special Session to address the contents of the negotiation.

CFHLA is Monitoring this New Gaming Compact.

IN THE NEWS

Gov. DeSantis: Covid-19 emergency is over

Lawmakers pass $101.5 billion budget, boosted by federal recovery funds

Florida Sports Betting Bill Heads to Special Session

State extends work search waiver for unemployed Floridians

2021 is Seminole County’s year of ‘tourism resiliency and reinvestment,’ said expert

Lawmakers pass vaccine ‘passport’ bill

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