SPECIAL SESSION

Last week, at the request of Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Legislature met for a Special Session to address COVID safety measures for businesses and schools. Ultimately, four COVID related bills were passed by the Legislature last Wednesday and Governor DeSantis signed all of them into law on Thursday.

Here's a breakdown of the bills that were passed and signed into law:

**HB 1B – COVID-19 Mandates**
This bill bans vaccine mandates for local governments and public schools. The bill also bans mandates for private businesses, unless the companies offer five opt-out options:

1. Exempt employees for medical (including anticipated pregnancy).
2. Religious reasons.
3. Prior COVID-19 infection/immunity proved through testing.
4. If an employee agrees to regular COVID-19 testing.
5. The wearing of protective equipment, such as a mask.

Companies with more than 100 employees that impose a vaccine mandate without proper exemptions, or deny a valid exemption will face fines of up to $50,000 per violation. For businesses with fewer than 100 employees, the fine will be up to $10,000 per violation. A worker will be able to file a complaint with Attorney General Ashley Moody’s office if they’re denied an exemption. If a business under investigation reinstates an employee with full back pay they can avoid a fine. Anyone fired for refusing to take the vaccine is eligible for unemployment benefits under the bill, and anyone already receiving benefits can’t be denied benefits if they receive a work offer from an employer who has a
vaccine mandate. Other provisions in the bill will explicitly state parents have the right to decide whether their children wear masks to school.

**HB 3B – Public Records/Employer COVID-10 Vaccination Policies**

This bill shields from public view any complaint filed by an employee to the Attorney General's office against a business accused of violating the proposed new law on vaccine mandates. Any records regarding an investigation would be exempt from the state's public record laws while the investigation is underway. This also blocks medical and religious exemption information filed by workers that appears in any investigation of a business from public disclosure.

**HB 7B – Vaccinations During Public Health Emergencies**

Although never used in Florida, the Surgeon General previously had the authority to require mandatory vaccinations and quarantines. This bill repeals that authority.

**HB 5B – Florida Occupational Safety and Health State Plan**

This bill takes a step forward in removing Florida from OSHA's jurisdiction. The bill orders the Governor's office to develop a plan and sets aside $1 million for the project. Florida will set up its own workplace safety enforcement agency, which application would have to be approved by OSHA.

This legislation was a reaction to President Biden's vaccine mandate, which was to be enforced by OSHA, but a federal court recently struck down the mandate. OSHA stated they were backing down and would respect the court's recent ruling.

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**2022 CFHLA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Looking ahead, the CFHLA Board of Directors approved the following 2022 legislative priorities at last week's board retreat. Our priorities outlined below, include a variety of important issues facing the Central Florida hospitality and tourism industry. [CLICK HERE](https://cfhla.memberclicks.net/administrator/index.php?option=com_mccore&view=contactcenter) for more information.

**Tourist Development Tax (TDT)**

CFHLA strongly advocates for preserving the integrity of this "bed tax" and opposes any efforts to expand the allowable uses beyond tourism promotion including public facility projects such as transportation, sewage, etc.

**VISIT FLORIDA Funding**

CFHLA supports the public-private business model for VISIT FLORIDA and will continue to recommend a long-term continuation of its enabling statute.

**Vacation Rentals Shared Lodging Platforms**

CFHLA supports initiatives that ensure "shared lodging" businesses also practice the same safety standards as traditional lodging to protect visitors. CFHLA also opposes any legislative efforts that would prevent local governments from regulating unregistered and "illegal" vacation rental properties listed on "shared lodging" platforms.

**Data Privacy**

CFHLA believes that individual companies should be able to make decisions on how they use, store, and share consumer data and information.

**Florida Timeshare Act**

CFHLA supports ARDA's legislative proposal, which seeks the clarification and modernization of several provisions in the Florida Timeshare Act. These proposed changes would help bring the statute up to date relative to the current business model and available technology.

**Workforce/Affordable Housing**

CFHLA believes that the Florida Legislature should continue to utilize the
Sadowski Fund only for its intended purpose to develop quality workforce housing for the constituents of Florida struggling to find adequate living arrangements.

**Property Tax Extension**
CFHLA is advocating for local Property Tax appraisers and collectors, to be given the short-term authority to allow for flexible and/or extended repayment options, as the Tourism Industry-related businesses continue to recover.

**Other Issues CFHLA is Monitoring**
- Revisions to Florida Statutes 509
- Revisions to Florida’s Building Codes

**INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT**

On November 5th, President Joe Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law. This bill will help revolutionize the way people move and travel throughout the U.S., as we rebuild from the pandemic and welcome back visitors again from around the world. To read more about the bill's travel-related provisions, please [CLICK HERE](https://cfhla.memberclicks.net/administrator/index.php?option=com_mccore&view=contactcenter).

CFHLA continues to seek community solutions that will address our transportation needs for the region.

**GA COMMITTEE**

On November 10th, the CFHLA Governmental Affairs Committee held their monthly meeting at Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort (Thank you Elizabeth Watkins) with special guest speaker, State Representative Travaris McCurdy (HD46). Representative McCurdy took the time to hear from our hospitality leaders regarding the issues that are of utmost importance for the upcoming legislative session.

The next CFHLA Governmental Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8th, with special guest Osceola County Commissioner Viviana Janer (District 2).
REGIONAL TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX UPDATE

Recently, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties released their September 2021 Tourist Development Tax collection numbers.

**Orange County TDT**

In September 2021, Orange County collected $16,455,000 in Tourist Development Tax, which is a 134% increase over September 2020! September collections were lower than August 2021 collections by $7,100 and were also lower than September 2019 collections by $1.3 million. In addition, September collections were lower than any pre-pandemic September since 2015. However, collections remain significantly above where they were at the beginning of the pandemic.

For more information on Orange County TDT numbers, please CLICK HERE.

**Osceola County TDT**

In September 2021, Osceola County collected $3,301,495 in Tourist Development Tax, which is a 105% increase over September 2020! September 2021 collections were only $251,921 less than September 2019 TDT collections.

**Seminole County TDT**
In September 2021, Seminole County collected $359,119 in Tourist Development Tax, which is a 55% increase over September 2020!

CITY OF ORLANDO ELECTION RESULTS

On November 2nd, the City of Orlando held their elections for three City Council races. We are proud to announce that all three CFHLA PAC/PC endorsed candidates won their re-election races! CLICK HERE to read our official Election Night announcement.

Congratulations to Commissioners Jim Gray, Regina Hill and Robert Stuart and on their big wins!

DONATE

CFHLA MEMBERS - Please consider making a donation of $50 via the link below to the CFHLA-PAC to support its efforts in supporting and endorsing Hospitality-Friendly candidates in the State of Florida.
As a reminder, all CFHLA Board Members, PAC Board Members, and ARC Board Members have committed to contributing $100 to the CFHLA-PAC in 2021. If you are a part of one or more of these groups, please fulfill your invoice today, or pay via the link above.

IN THE NEWS

Orlando's state representative files bill to expand TDT uses (Orlando Business Journal)

Florida lawmakers approve limits on vaccine mandates at special session (Bay News 9)

Visit Florida data shows Q3 visitors higher than same time in 2019 (Spectrum News 13)

Carolinases on their mind: VISIT FLORIDA sees new rivals for vacationers (Florida Politics)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: A major boost for the hospitality industry (ZS)

New rules for Osceola Co. motels, hotels converting into affordable housing (Fox 35)