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**FRA Midsession Legislative UPDATE**

Editor’s Note: Under the heading of no news is good news, it has been a session with minimal crisis for FRA topics and issues. But that may be due to all the hard work by your lobbyists with issue building and communications invested in previous sessions. The issues tend to come up again and again each year, so from one year to the next, there is institutional memory about whether a bill is “good” or “not so good”. Passing a bill is much more difficult than defeating one.

But it is early, as they say, and now the very fluid process of the session begins. Committees stop meeting, so the only chance to pass legislative changes is to amend your language on to a bill that is progressing through the system. These “vehicles” grow in length and stature as statutory language is added to them via amendments on the floor of the house or senate.

There are rules that determine whether bill language can be attached to another bill, such as the amendment has to be the same section of the statutes that is already in the bill, and that it must have been heard in committee at least once prior; however, there are exceptions to every rule and by a two thirds vote of the body, all the rules can be waived.

Thus, lobbyists go on a solid three week schedule of “put or find the amendment in the bill” game. Amendments are filed and withdrawn continually on the floor reflecting this ebb and flow of activity. If the amendment is controversial but the sponsor wants to go forward anyway, a “floor fight” might ensue. Lobbyists strain to communicate their clients’ positions to legislators who are “in chambers” because they are outside in “the lobby”. Exciting times! So stay tuned and we will send any alerts to you directly. Our legislative positions are at [www.redevelopment.net](http://www.redevelopment.net).

Thank you to our lobbyists Bill Peebles and John Wayne Smith for their great work, and you, our members, for your support!

Carol Westmoreland, FRA Executive Director

To check the status of any bill, find information on legislators and staff, the Florida Constitution, complete Florida Statutes and legislative history of laws, go to <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm?CFID=139206087&CFTOKEN=54103585> and select bills or statutes, etc.

**SB 856/HB 621**

These bills expand the definition of blighted for creation of CRA's to include land which is formerly a military installation, and adjacent to a zoological park owned by a county (written for Miami Dade County project). The House bill has four committee references and has not been heard yet. It is likely dead for the year. However, Senator Abruzzo offered, but withdrew, an amendment on the senate bill which would provide that an inspector general or internal auditor of a city or county has jurisdiction over, and may audit, any CRA created by that city or county. This could be related to a recent audit of the Delray Beach CRA pursued by the Senator, but we are opposed to the change. The language in the amendment seems to make broader, although unintended, statutory changes to the status of CRAs legally. The Senate bill now goes to Senate Appropriations.

**SB 934/HB 183**

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2013/0934>

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2013/0183>

These bills provide for relaxed storm water permitting for redevelopment. Both bills are on the calendars of their respective bodies and it looks like, after 2 years of trying, we may be able to see these bills become law.

**CDBG**

For the latest, refer to CS/HB 7007 at <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/>

The Governor's office and the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) have suggested changes to give broad authority to the department regarding Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant awards. The original language in the bill would have eliminated any statutory criteria for distribution of CDBG grants, leaving DEO with unbridled discretion, subject only to Federal guidelines, in the distribution of these funds. DEO opposed the FRA’s suggested deletion of that language, but Chairman Patronis in the House eliminated the DEO language, leaving current statutory criteria intact. We will see if it appears again, and what the final language will be. The FRA is front and center on these negotiations, with the Florida League of Cities.

**Brownfields**

SB 406 contains language substantially limiting the geographic area within which Brownfield clean up funds can be expended. The House bill contains no such provisions. We are supporting the efforts of the Florida Brownfields Association to strike or amend the Senate language.

An amendment (Rep. Trujillo) containing the original Senate proposed Brownfield language has been proposed to HB 7007, which is being heard in a House committee today.   We are closely monitoring this. Please keep your local governments, businesses, and clients abreast if they may be affected by the proposed changes to the Brownfield Job Bonus and the building materials sales tax refund.   In addition, if you have a lobbyist involved or working on this issue ask them to contact lobbyist Bo Bohannon at the Capitol.

*For more information, contact Carol Westmoreland, FRA Executive Director, at* *cwestmoreland@flcities.com* *or 850-570-7206.*