

2021 Legislative Session

Weekly Brief

Updated – 4/5/2021

*This list is preliminary and is neither exclusive nor exhaustive but represents our positions on some of the priority bills that have been filed to date and may see activity this session. Activity listed in **bold** occurred since the last briefing update.*

Employee Organizations (Union Busting Educational Personnel) – more likely

SB 1014 by Baxley / HB 835 by Byrd

OPPOSE

These bills make three major changes to Florida's public employee labor laws that hinder the constitutional right of our public sector workers to belong to a union and collectively bargain.

- **These bills contain similar harassment provisions of SB 78, but they are only applied to K-12 teachers and instructional personnel in the state college and university systems. Education support employees have been removed.**
 - Mandatory re-authorization of dues deductions every year.
 - The employer is in charge of this new re-certification process for the first time in history. There are no penalties if the employer does not complete this process. Members of the union who had no intention to cancel their membership would have a period of doubt and confusion about their representation.
 - Benefits afforded to the workers by their union could be disrupted every two years.
 - Membership forms must contain state crafted language that seeks to encourage them not to join.
- Unions representing K-12 teachers must prove that they represent 50% or more of the total bargaining unit or risk decertification. **These bills expand the 50% requirement to include instructional personnel in the state college and university systems.**
- **Both bills ban automatic paycheck deductions for union dues for bargaining units representing K-12 instructional personnel and instructional personnel in the state college and university systems.**
- These bills also add new reporting and data collection requirements for bargaining units representing these two groups of workers.

SB 1014

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Judiciary; Rules / Favorable with CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 3 Yeas, 2 Nays / Reference to Judiciary removed; Remaining reference: Rules / **On Committee agenda - Rules, 04/06/21, 9:30 am, 412 K**

HB 835

Referred to Government Operations Subcommittee; Education & Employment Committee; State Affairs Committee / Now in Government Operations Subcommittee / Favorable with CS by Government Operations Subcommittee; 12 Yeas, 6 Nays / Reference to State Affairs Committee removed; Reference to State Administration & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee added; Remaining references: State Administration & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee, Education & Employment Committee / **Favorable with CS by State Administration & Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; 9 Yeas, 5 Nays**

Dues and Uniform Assessments (Union Busting Everybody Else) – less likely

SB 78 by Rodrigues (R) / HB 947 by Plakon

OPPOSE

Much like the notorious HB 1 from 2020, some leaders in the Florida Legislature have come back to Tallahassee to attack the unions representing our teachers, state and municipal workers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other public sector workers, however, this time they are from the Senate. The bill is similar to policies that have been enacted in Alaska (although currently being blocked by court order) to change the ways in which union dues are collected. These changes rely on an overly broad interpretation of the landmark “Janus” ruling by the Supreme Court. This ruling banned the collection of agency fees (fees used exclusively to pay for the costs of collective bargaining) from non-union members of the bargaining unit. SB 78 will make it far more difficult for new members to join the union and for the union to collect dues from current members.

- One of the most burdensome aspects of the bill is that after the employer receives a signed dues authorization; deductions would not start until the employer goes on to “confirm with the employee, electronically or by other means, that he or she authorized the deduction of dues and uniform assessments.” This puts the employer in charge of the dues authorization process for the first time in history. There is an amendment filed that requires the employers to process the authorizations within thirty days of receiving the signed form but does not offer any penalties for employers who do not meet that deadline and the amendment doesn’t describe the default if employers do not meet that deadline. Will the worker’s membership lapse or will they be retained?
- SB 78 would require dues authorizations to be renewed every three years, meaning the union/employer would have to chase down re-authorization forms from members who have no intention of leaving the union.
- The bill also requires dues authorizations to include the following non-neutral language in bold letters and at least a 14-point type meant to discourage current and potential members from joining.

“I acknowledge and understand that I have a First Amendment right, as recognized by the United States Supreme Court, to refuse to join or financially support a union, that union membership and payment of union dues and uniform assessments are voluntary, and that I may not be discriminated against in any manner should I refuse to join or financially support a union.”

*****SB 78-An amendment has been filed that will remove the bargaining agents for first responders from the requirements of the bill. All other public section affiliates will be subject to these requirements.**

SB 78

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Judiciary; Rules /Favorable by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 4 Yeas, 2 Nays / Temporarily Postponed by Judiciary / Favorable by Judiciary; 6 Yeas, 4 Nays / On Committee agenda - Rules, 03/04/21, 9:00 am, 412 K / Not Considered by Rules / **On Committee agenda - Rules, 04/06/21, 9:30 am, 412 K**

HB 947

Referred to Government Operations Subcommittee; State Affairs Committee / Now in Government Operations Subcommittee / Favorable by Government Operations Subcommittee; 12 Yeas, 6 Nays / Now in State Affairs Committee

Florida Retirement System (Eliminating FRS Public Pension)

SB 84 by Rodrigues (R) /

OPPOSE

The Florida Legislature has long wanted to eliminate the defined benefit (pension) plan under the Florida Retirement System which covers state and local government workers impacting millions of Floridians. These plans directly impact about 1.3 million current or former public employees in Florida and millions of their dependents and other family members. In addition, tens of thousands of Florida businesses benefit each day when retirees spend their retirement checks on goods and services in every community in Florida. Every dollar in FRS benefits pays out generates \$1.68 in economic boost to local cash registers. Economists at the AARP project that the FRS adds a total of \$18.2 billion in economic output in Florida, supporting over 123,000 jobs and \$2.7 billion in state, local and Federal taxes. These bills are all pieces of a plan to conduct a “hard close” of the FRS pension. SB 84, forces all new hires into yet to be developed 401(K) type systems, even though FRS is one of the strongest pension systems in the world. Closing the plan will cost billions for state taxpayers and risks the retirement security for teachers, police officers, firefighters and other public sector workers.

The last actuarial analysis of this change, conducted in 2013, shows that closing the pension to new hires will cost taxpayers \$150 million the first year, \$300 million the second, \$450 million in the year and so on for a minimum of eight years. These bills force all new public sector workers into turning their retirement security over to Wall Street as opposed to a carefully managed state system, thus placing all the risk on public sector employees whereas now that risk is managed by the state. This legislative package is very complex and we are working with our partners and experts on a detailed analysis that will be available in the following weeks. ***Special Risk participants have been carved out and will still be able to join the pension. However, this will bankrupt the system even sooner since a smaller group receiving the most benefits will be drawing those benefits from a fund that how no other employees paying into it.***

SB 84

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Appropriations / Favorable by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 4 Yeas, 2 Nays / **On Committee agenda - Appropriations, 03/31/21, 1:00 pm, 412 K**

Sales and Use Tax

SB 50 by Gruters / HB 15 by Clemons

OPPOSE

Florida's Unemployment Insurance System (UI) is not a worker benefit program but a business insurance program. Nationally, UI was established after the Great Depression to make sure that unemployed workers maintained some spending power to keep businesses functioning during periods of mass layoffs. Businesses pay premiums (now called taxes but really, they are insurance premiums) for this insurance trust fund. This fund is where UI benefits for unemployed workers come from. In 2011, due to an insolvent fund, businesses pushed to keep their premiums the same, rather than increasing as the law says. They did this by slashing benefits and eligibility, so workers paid the price to keep these premiums low. That is what led to the crisis last year. This time around, the fund is low and by law, business premiums are supposed to go up. In order to keep these premiums the same, they are going to start collecting taxes on internet sales (raising taxes on workers) and then put those newly generated dollars into the insurance trust fund to keep business premiums the same, just like 2011.

- **These bills are not new taxes in the strict sense, but they are new laws to require the collection of a tax already owed. WE DO NOT OPPOSE THIS, IT IS WHAT THEY ARE DOING WITH THE NEW MONEY COLLECTED, ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT \$1 BILLION IN THE FIRST YEAR.**
- The injustice here is that workers will be paying more taxes and that those taxes will be used exclusively to pay for an Unemployment Insurance system that has failed them miserably.
- If workers are paying more taxes for the UI system, shouldn't some, or all, of that money be used to fix the broken UI system and not to bail out big business?
- It is big businesses' responsibility to pay for unemployment, why is it fair to shift that responsibility to working families? Especially when the majority of unemployed workers never received a single penny from the UI system last year...or now!
- ***Additionally, an amendment was added to HB 15 to use some of this money to pay the tax on commercial leases for big businesses, so working families will now be paying for that business responsibility as well. The Senate will now have to vote on that change.***

SB 50

Referred to Commerce and Tourism; Finance and Tax; Appropriations / Favorable by Commerce and Tourism; 11 Yeas, 0 Nays / Favorable with CS by Finance and Tax; 8 Yeas, 0 Nays / Favorable with CS by Appropriations; 18 Yeas, 0 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/11/21 / Temporarily Postponed on Second Reading / Retained on Special Order Calendar / Temporarily Postponed on Second Reading / Retained on Special Order Calendar / **Read Second Time; Amendment Adopted (913612); Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 30 Yeas / 10 Nays); Immediately certified / Engrossed Text (E1) Filed / HOUSE: In Messages / HOUSE: Placed on Special Order Calendar, 4/7/2021**

HB 15

Referred to Ways & Means Committee; Commerce Committee / Favorable with CS by Ways & Means Committee; 16 Yeas, 2 Nays / **Favorable with CS by Commerce Committee; 23 Yeas, 0 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 4/7/2021**

Reemployment Assistance

SB 1906 by Brodeur

SUPPORT

As filed, this bill only seeks to raise the maximum weekly unemployment benefit amount by \$100 to \$375 per week, but the bill does not address the fact that almost 90% of unemployed workers receives any payments at all. We support the increase but are working to amend the bill to increase overall worker eligibility. Since businesses are being bailed out to the tune of four billion dollars over a period of years (see above), it's the least the Legislature can do.

SB 1906

Referred to Commerce and Tourism; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; Appropriations / Favorable with CS by Commerce and Tourism; 9 Yeas, 1 Nay / Reference to Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development removed / Now in Appropriations

Combating Public Disorder (Criminalizing Public Protest)

HB 1 by Fernandez-Barquin / SB 484 by Burgess

OPPOSE

The American Labor Movement has a long and storied history with peaceful protest and civil disobedience. It is a tactic that's careful and thoughtful exercise has moved mountains and helped create the society we have today. Our members have a deep and solemn respect for peaceful but firm mobilization and from the earliest days of the civil rights movement we have stood arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder both in the streets and in jail cells with our allies who fight for social, economic and racial justice. This legislation criminalizes those practices by creating new crimes for activities that could be considered peaceful assembly. The legislation radically alters over 12 areas of current law and will lead to many more arrests for action and events most consider protected speech activities. The net effect will be more violence not less. These changes were first rolled out by Governor DeSantis during last year's campaigns following actions across the state in support of Black Lives Matter, racial justice and law enforcement reform. The bill has been widely reported to be the Governor's number one priority during this COVID-19 pandemic session.

HB 1

Referred to Criminal Justice & Public Safety Subcommittee; Justice Appropriations Subcommittee; Judiciary Committee / Favorable by Criminal Justice & Public Subcommittee; 11 Yeas, 6 Nays / Now in Justice Appropriations Subcommittee / Favorable by Justice Appropriations Subcommittee on 03/03/21; 10 Yeas, 5 Nays / Favorable with CS by Judiciary Committee; 14 Yeas, 7 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/25/21 / **Read Second Time; Amendments Failed (29854, 694491, 78765, 960979); Amendments Adopted (175541, 580221, 491535, 423835); Placed on Third Reading, 03/26/21 / Engrossed Text (E1) Filed / Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 76 Yeas / 39 Nays) / SENATE: In Messages/ SENATE: Received; Referred to Appropriations**

SB 484

Referred to Criminal Justice; Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice; Appropriations

Civil Liability for Damages Relating to COVID-19

SB 72 by Brandes / HB 7 by McClure

OPPOSE

Florida has repeatedly been a laughing-stock of the nation during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic for our poorly crafted, decentralized approach to mitigation strategies to prevent the transmission of the virus. Our state has been an epicenter of the pandemic multiple times over the course of the past year. The business community pushed for an early reopening of the state, far outside of the recommendations of the CDC contributing to over 1.8 million infections, almost 80,000 hospitalizations and over 31,000 deaths. Now, many of those responsible are pushing for blanket immunity from liability for death, injury or other damages in our civil court system. This immunity is being granted through impossible pre-trial hurdles, a raising of the standards of judgement to the same

requirements as manslaughter in criminal cases and an incredibly short statute of limitations. The workers' compensation system is not covering these cases and this bill closes the civil court system to workers who were forced to engage in unsafe behavior to keep their jobs. The fact that this is number one COVID-related priority for our government is truly ghoulish. There should be some protections against frivolous litigation in these cases but these bills have no balance and give all the power and benefit to big corporations and all attempts to provide some balance for working families have been denied.

SB 72

Referred to Judiciary; Commerce and Tourism; Rules / Favorable by Judiciary; 7 Yeas, 4 Nays / Temporarily Postponed by Commerce and Tourism / Favorable by Commerce and Tourism; 7 Yeas, 4 Nays / Favorable with CS by Rules; 10 Yeas, 5 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/18/21 / Read Second Time; Amendments Failed (273472, 433794, 735608, 645490, 504394, 930780, 261298); Amendment Adopted (549168); Amendment Withdrawn (435730); **Passed (Vote: 24 Yeas / 15 Nays)** / Immediately certified/ Engrossed Text / (E1) Filed / HOUSE In Messages / House Received, Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/25/21 / **HOUSE Read Second Time; Placed on Third Reading, 03/26/21 / HOUSE Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 83 Yeas / 31 Nays); Immediately Certified / SENATE: Ordered enrolled / SB 72 Approved by Governor; Chapter No. 2021-001**

HB 7

Referred to Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee; Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee; Judiciary Committee / Favorable by Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee; 11 Yeas, 6 Nays / Favorable by Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee; 11 Yeas, 6 Nays / Favorable with CS by Judiciary Committee; 14 Yeas, 7 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/04/21 / **Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 83 Yeas / 31 Nays) / SENATE: In Messages / SENATE: Received; Referred to Rules**

*****SB 72 & SB 74 (below) have been merged via an amendment by Brandes. HB 7 & HB 7005 have not yet been amended to merge the two bills but is expected.**

COVID-19-Related Claims Against Health Care Providers

SB 74 by Brandes / HB 7005 by Health/Human Services, Burton

OPPOSE

The bills described above do not apply to healthcare or long-term care facilities. The thinking early on was that there needed to be different standards in these cases. For example, if a nursing home resident hadn't left a facility for over a year caught COVID, how could the nursing home corporation claim no liability? This was scrapped and these bills apply the same completely unjust standards present in the other bills. This means that both patients and healthcare workers will be denied their constitutional rights to access the court system to address their losses.

SB 74

Referred to Judiciary; Health Policy; Rules / Favorable by Judiciary; 6 Yeas; 4 Nays / Now in Health Policy / Favorable by Health Policy; 5 Yeas, 4 Nays / Now in Rules / Not Considered by Rules

HB 7005 (Previously PCB HHS1)

Submitted as Committee Bill and Reported Favorably by Health & Human Services Committee; 17 Yeas, 3 Nays / Referred to Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee; Judiciary Committee / Now in Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee / Favorable with CS by Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee; 12 Yeas, 6 Nays / Favorable with CS by Judiciary Committee; 15 Yeas, 5 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Public Works Projects

SB 1076 by Brodeur / HB 53 by DiCeglie

OPPOSE

In 2017, HB 599 that was signed into law providing that if "50% or more of the cost will be paid from state-appropriated funds then local ordinances for wages and benefits, training, local hire and others are preempted. This was a major preemption battle that started with the position IF ANY state funds were involved these preemptions of local ordinances would exist but we fought for the 50% compromise and succeeded. The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) are

back to eliminate that compromise and mandate that if any state funds are involved in a public project then preemptions against responsible wage ordinances, local hire preferences and the required use of apprentices from the community will be null and void. This is a disastrous preemption that would eliminate the hard work of communities across Florida who have pursued these ordinances as a part of their overall local economic development programs. The bill is being pursued by the state's biggest contractors who are looking for increased market dominance, lower wages and higher profits.

SB 1076

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Community Affairs; Rules / Favorable with CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 4 Yeas, 2 Nays / **Favorable with CS by Community Affairs; 6 Yeas, 3 Nays / Now in Rules**

HB 53

Referred to Government Operations Subcommittee; Public Integrity & Elections Committee; State Affairs Committee / Now in Government Operations Subcommittee / Favorable with CS by Government Operations Subcommittee; 10 Yeas, 6 Nays / **Favorable with CS by Public Integrity & Elections Committee; 11 Yeas, 6 Nays / Now in State Affairs Committee**

Expanding School Privatization

SB 48 by Diaz

OPPOSE

SB 48 represents one of the largest expansions of Florida's school privatization disaster in state history. The bill combines and expands the state's voucher programs that takes funding directly from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), removing vital funding from our neighborhood public schools in order to support private schools. Florida faces an over two-billion-dollar shortfall and Florida students and their schools are struggling to navigate the impacts of the pandemic. This is the worst possible time to be taking even more money away from public schools. This legislation would dilute the teacher salary allocation requiring money to be shared with private schools. Florida's public schools are facing a teacher shortage crisis. This is the wrong time to be undermining any efforts to hire and retain teachers to our understaffed classrooms. Additionally, SB 48 would send billions in taxpayer funds directly to unaccountable for-profit and religious institutions without any meaningful way to see if the tax payers are getting a return on their investment. Voucher schools select their students and parents, their curriculum and tests, and are not graded in any way, unlike neighborhood public schools, nor must they hire certified teachers. We have already seen that taxpayers are wastefully funding a revolving door of students where 37% of voucher receiving students leave their voucher school within one year, and more than half leave within two years. The majority return to public schools performing worse than when they left.

SB 48

Referred to Education; Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; Appropriations / Favorable by Education; 6 Yeas, 4 Nays / Favorable with CS by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; 6 Yeas, 3 Nays / Favorable with CS by Appropriations; 11 Yeas, 8 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading

Public Records & Public Meetings (Postsecondary Ed Executive Search/Secrecy Bill)

SB 220 by Brandes & Rodrigues (R) / HB 997 by Garrison

OPPOSE

Our university and college presidents are some of the highest-paid and most powerful unelected public servants in the State. Collectively, these individuals control approximately \$12.8 billion each year in taxpayer funding and billions more in Foundation and other dollars, as well as the jobs of thousands of faculty and staff and the education of our students. In 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020, the Florida Legislature advanced legislation that would make the hiring processes for these powerful leaders' secret and exempt from Florida's Sunshine Law. This bill will once again try to cast a cloud over what is now a public process. It is vital to the faculty, staff and families we represent that these searches stay in the sunshine. This bill requires a 2/3 vote in each chamber for passage as an exemption to the Sunshine Law.

SB 220

Referred to Education; Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Rules / Favorable by Education; 6

Yeas, 4 Nays / Favorable with CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 4 Yeas, 2 Nays / Now in Rules

HB 997

Referred to Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee; Government Operations Subcommittee; Education & Employment Committee / Now in Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee / Favorable by Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee; 14 Yeas, 3 Nays / Favorable by Government Operations Subcommittee; 11 Yeas, 5 Nays / On Committee agenda - Education & Employment Committee, 03/29/21, 1:00 pm, 17 H / **Favorable by Education & Employment Committee; 15 Yeas, 4 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading**

Imposing Term Limits on Local School Boards

HB 11 by Sabatini/ SB 1642 by Gruters

OPPOSE

In 2018, school privatization advocates on the Constitutional Revision Commission pushed several proposals designed to weaken locally elected school boards, most of which have begun pushing back against the widespread privatization of the schools in their districts, especially in the area of Charter Schools. These included a proposal banning pay for school board members (only rich people can serve), imposed term limits (to get rid of the ones that push back on their agenda) and the elimination of elected School Superintendents (so there is nobody elected to hold the new, unpaid school boards accountable). The one they really wanted was term limits, and it made it through the process but was struck down by the courts because it was bundled to one that was ruled unclear and inaccurate, some Justices even said dishonest. For the third year in a row, the term limit constitutional amendment is back in the Legislature. This one size fits all policy would allow large numbers of voters in some parts of the state to fundamentally change local governments in all parts of the state. The purpose is to weaken school boards by allowing more elections that can be dominated by the huge amounts of cash held by the school privatization industry. Unfortunately, term limits are very popular, especially amongst lower information voters, so many Democrats have supported this bad proposal in the past.

HB 11

Referred to Secondary Education & Career Development Subcommittee; Public Integrity & Elections; Education & Employment / Now in Secondary Education & Career Development Subcommittee

SB 1642

Referred to Education; Ethics and Elections; Rules

Banning District School Board Member Salaries

SB 1180 by Rodrigues

OPPOSE

The forces of school privatization began working behind the scenes during the 2018 Constitutional Revision Commission process to dramatically restructure Florida's 67 school boards. These for-profit and ideologically driven interests realize that the last barrier to the wholesale privatization of public education are these school boards. The CRC worked to impose school board term-limits, ban paying salaries for school board members and eliminating elected school superintendents who could serve as a check on newly weakened school boards. Over the past two sessions, we have successfully beat back proposed amendments to impose school board term limits and none have been filed yet this session. This statutory change, requiring only a simple majority vote, will phase out all pay for school board members and prohibit compensation for any newly elected school members beginning this year. Since most teachers, parents and other community members can't afford not to have a paying job, this change will dramatically impact the composition of our school boards. They will look wealthier, whiter and ideologically more beholden to school privatization special interests.

SB 1180

Referred to Education; Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; Appropriations

Politicizing Higher Education in Florida

SB 264 by Rodrigues (R) /HB 233 by Roach

OPPOSE

These bills require that the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors annually conduct an assessment of the intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity at each state college and university

respectively by September 1st of each year beginning September 1, 2022. The legislation requires the use of an objective, nonpartisan, and statistically valid survey which considers the extent to which competing ideas and perspectives are presented and members of the institution's community feel free to express their beliefs and viewpoints on campus and in the classroom. This legislation is harmful for several reasons:

- This process opens opportunities for political manipulation and will have a chilling effect on intellectual and academic freedom, values held and cherished by academia. We already see right-wing groups organizing students to use social media and other forums to challenge faculty who offer instruction on climate change, issues of racial and gender equality, supply-side economic principals and other subject areas that have been needlessly politicized.
- This push could force the equal treatment of frameworks backed by conspiracy theories, hate speech and misinformation campaigns.
- Researchers point out that a purely subjective survey, like the one described in the legislation cannot measure or characterize any such viewpoints and is intrusive to the freedom and viewpoints held by faculty and students.
- The bill could force all campuses to give equal space/time to groups recognized as hate speech groups, overriding the judgements of local school officials motivated by public safety.
- These bills represent model legislation that has been offered in many states that is being pushed by a network of billionaire funded right-wing think tanks.

SB 264

Referred to Education; Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; Appropriations / Favorable with CS by Education; 6 Yeas, 4 Nays / Favorable with CS by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education; 6 Yeas, 3 Nays / Favorable with CS by Appropriations; 12 Yeas, 8 Nays / **Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Placed on Special Order Calendar, 04/01/21 / Read Second Time; Substituted for HB 233; Laid on Table, Refer to HB 233**

HB 233

Referred to Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee; Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee; Education & Employment Committee / Favorable with Amendments by Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Subcommittee; 12 Yeas, 6 Nays / Reference to Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee removed; Remaining reference Education & Employment Committee / Favorable with CS by Education & Employment Committee; 14 Yeas, 6 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading– Placed on Special Order Calendar, 03/18/21 / Read Second Time; Read Third Time; **Passed (Vote: 77 Yeas / 42 Nays) / SENATE: In Messages / SENATE: Received; Referred to Appropriations / SENATE: Withdrawn from Appropriations; Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading; Substituted for SB 0264; Read Second Time; Placed on Third Reading, 04/07/21**

Abolishing the Constitutional Revision Commission (CRC)

SB 204 by Brandes / HB 1179 by Beltran

SUPPORT

The CRC is empowered by Florida's Constitution to meet every twenty years to discuss changes to the constitution with the ability to place proposed amendments directly on the ballot for the voters to consider. The CRC is composed of the Attorney General, fifteen appointees from the Governor, nine appointees from the Florida Senate President, nine appointees from the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, and three appointees from the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. For the period of time they are in deliberations, they are almost untouchable and have incredible power. The 2017-2018 CRC was a disaster. The appointees were loyalists to their appointing authority, not experts in critical areas. The rules that were adopted did not allow for adequate public input when they were enforced. Analyses of proposals were not independent and seldom completed in a timely manner, and the entire Commission process became a theater to settle old political scores, not a careful examination of the Constitution. The process was so fraught with problems that it drew bipartisan scorn, and for the third year in a row, some Republicans are now pushing these proposals to ask the voters to remove this powerful, unchecked body from our Constitution.

SB 204

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Rules / Favorable by Governmental Oversight and Accountability; 6 Yeas, 0 Nays / Favorable by Rules; 12 Yeas, 3 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading / Read Second Time; Placed on Third Reading, 03/25/21 / **Read Third Time; Passed (Vote: 27 Yeas / 12 Nays); Immediately certified / HOUSE: In Messages**

HB 1179

Referred to Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee; Judiciary Committee / Now in Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee / Favorable by Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee; 12 Yeas, 4 Nays / On Committee agenda - Judiciary Committee, 03/29/21, 1:00 pm, 404 H / **Favorable by Judiciary Committee; 16 Yeas, 4 Nays / Placed on Calendar, on 2nd reading**

Cutting the New Minimum Wage Constitutional Amendment

SB 854 by Brandes / HB 1485 by Gregory

OPPOSE

In the 2020 Elections over 60% of the electorate voted for a phased-in increase of the minimum wage in Florida to \$15 an hour. A \$15 minimum wage is now a basic right in our state. As usual, big business special interests and their supporters are looking to interfere with the will of the voters as they have done with almost every citizen's initiative over the past two decades. This proposed constitutional amendment would change 2020's Amendment 2 by taking away the right to a \$15-dollar minimum wage for working prisoners currently in the corrections system, returning felons, workers under 21 and "other hard to hire workers." The current, most conservative estimate is that this change will deny over two million workers of the basic right they were just granted. The language ignores that fact that poverty is a major reason for recidivism in returning felons and that many workers under 21 have families to provide for. Furthermore, "hard to hire" is not defined in the amendment language meaning the Florida Legislature would have to define this in statute, meaning millions more workers could be impacted. This bill and any companions require a 3/5 vote in each chamber as a proposed constitutional amendment.

SB 854

Referred to Commerce and Tourism; Appropriations; Rules

HB 1485

Referred to Regulatory Reform Subcommittee; Judiciary Committee; Commerce Committee / Now in Regulatory Reform Subcommittee

Assaults on Specified Persons

SB 980 by Perry

SUPPORT

Recent events and news reports indicate that assaults and other risks to our public safety officers are on the rise. This legislation would require that transit companies and local governments post notices that outline to serious legal consequences of harming transit operators and the development of risk reduction programs with specified components. The legislation also provides for stiffer penalties for assaults on transit operators and other workers. The Labor Community will be working to amend this legislation to provide for stronger requirements and additional specific requirements for the required risk reduction programs.

SB 980

Referred to Criminal Justice; Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; Appropriations / Favorable with CS by Criminal Justice; 8 Yeas, 0 Nays / Now in Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development

911 Public Safety Telecommunicators – FRS Special Risk

SB 1224 by Jones / HB 1171 by Willhite

SUPPORT

911 dispatchers are certified telecommunicators who serve as the first responders to law enforcement and professional firefighters, forcing them to deal with incredibly stressful and often traumatic situations. The well-documented fatigue and stress these workers endure and the resultant impacts to their physical and mental health, including very high rates of PTSD and depression warrant benefits provided by the Special Risk designation under the FRS, especially the ability to retire after twenty-

five years of service with no penalty. The ability for these telecommunicators to retire after twenty-five years of service would benefit the entire system, ensuring that law enforcement and fire-rescue agencies can count on professionals with no impairment to maintain a zero-failure environment.

SB 1224

Referred to Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Community Affairs; Appropriations

HB 1171

Referred to Governmental Operations Subcommittee; Appropriations Committee; State Affairs Committee / Now in Government Operations Subcommittee

Special Risk Retirement – Forensic & Other Hospital Workers

HB 477 by Alexander

SUPPORT

Forensic Healthcare workers help provide medical and humanitarian services for mentally disabled people whose illnesses have forced them into the criminal justice system or to be civilly committed. These patients are some of the most dangerous and difficult to work with. There are hundreds of workers who do their best to ensure that these mental patients are well cared for. These workers are often bitten, spat upon, urinated on, and a whole host of other dangerous types of assaults causing both physical and emotional anguish. Their hard work and dedication protect our safety and the safety of the mentally ill. However, they have never been afforded special risk status when it comes to the calculation of retirement benefits and terms of service. In 2000, managers, supervisors, nurses and other professional personnel were granted special risk status, but the frontline staffers, those who have the most contact with these patients, were not. This bill would correct this serious injustice.

HB 477

Referred to Government Operations Subcommittee; Appropriations Committee; State Affairs Committee / Now in Government Operations Subcommittee