

# PBC Legislative Update

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### **Week 5 – 2012 State Legislative Session – Mid Session Update**

**This week's report is a little longer as we have tried to report on all of Palm Beach County's Priority Issues in this year's legislative program to provide an update of where we stand mid-session.**

#### **State Issues**

##### **Budget**

*by: Ericks Consultants, County Staff*

The Florida House passed out its \$69.2 million budget on a party line vote. With a task to cut nearly \$2 billion from the annual appropriations act, the budget will allocate more than \$1 billion for PreK-12 education spending, a priority of Governor Scott. The bill cuts Higher education spending, raises college tuition rates and trims hundreds of millions of dollars from health care appropriations.

The Senate worked on its budget this week in committee, but will only give "recommendations" to the main budget committee which will write the final Senate product. The Senate is expected to have its full budget next week.

Below are some of PBC priority issues and where we stand:

##### ***Beach Restoration***

The House has included \$11.7M in their budget this year. The Senate included \$20M for beach funding statewide.

##### ***Libraries***

The Senate included full funding for \$21.3M with half of that coming from recurring general revenue.

***Florida Forever & Everglades*** House / Senate – no funding for this issue) Gov. recommended budget was \$40M

***Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup*** - \$128M in the Senate fully funds the program. The House currently has no funding for this issue.

***State Housing Trust Fund*** – No funding was provided for housing funds. See Homelessness write up for further details.

Below is a chart on other areas of interest of the County that we are currently tracking.

Issue	House Budget	Senate Budget
Northern Everglades & Estuary Protection	\$3,000,000	\$0
Everglades Restoration	\$30,000,000	\$0
Water Projects	\$8,033,172	\$0
Drinking Water SRF	\$68,079,716	\$71,516,916
Clean Water SRF	\$131,820,672	\$137,958,672

**Inland Port**

*by: County Staff*

Language is included in the legislature’s transportation package that will provide for certain state revenue for intermodal logistic centers under the state’s SIS funding for strategic transportation locations.

**Gaming**

*by: County Staff*

487 by Fresen/710 by Bogdanoff & 883 by Trujillo/986 by Altman

Throughout this Session, there have been numerous bills filed that relate to gaming. Some push towards destination gaming resorts, another allowing for slots at pari-mutuel facilities, and one promotes prohibition of Internet Cafés.

At the end of last week, HB 487 by Rep. Erik Fresen was temporarily postponed by the sponsor in the House Business and Consumer Affairs Subcommittee. In the Senate, similar legislation, SB 710 by Sen. Ellyn Bogdanoff was passed out of the Regulated Industries Committee by a vote of 7-3 on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Senate President Mike Haridopolos has made references relating to the continuation of moving the destination resorts package through the Senate.

In the same manner, the slot machine authorization at pari-mutuel facilities, HB 883 by Rep. Carlos Trujillo, was also temporarily postponed in the Business and Consumer Affairs Subcommittee. SB 986 by Sen. Thad Altman failed to pass the Regulated Industries Committee being voted down 3-7.

Rep. Scott Plakon is sponsoring HB 3, legislation that would prohibit Internet Cafés, also known as electronic sweepstakes. HB 3 passed the House Economic Affairs Committee down party lines by a vote of 12-6. It is now in the proper posture to come up for consideration of the full House. In the Senate, however, SB 428 by Sen. Steve Oelrich was temporarily postponed by Regulated Industries in late January.

The County has maintained its position to support parity for pari-mutuel facilities located within Palm Beach County.

**Film & TV**

*by: County Staff and Foley & Lardner*

This week, representatives from Film Florida came to Tallahassee to meet with legislators on the Finance & Tax and Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Committees to discuss issues relating to tax incentives for film and television series. The two priority issues on the agenda were the removal of the current 25% cap on high impact television series and the addition of up to \$60 million per year in new tax credits through 2015.

We’d like to thank Senators Lizbeth Benacquisto, Ellyn Bogdanoff, and Maria Sachs; Representatives Lori Berman, Pat Rooney, Joseph Abruzzo and George Moraitis; and all of their staff for their consideration of these film and television priorities.

## **Medicaid**

*by: County Staff*

This week the Florida Senate HHS committee released a budget that would reduce the amount of reimbursements for hospitals by 7%, over \$200 million statewide. While the Senate has moved away from earlier language that would have added additional days for counties to pay Medicaid cost for inpatient hospital care; they remain committed to collect disputed billing charges under Medicaid. The total statewide figure amounts to \$325 million with Palm Beach County's share just over \$9 million.

The House budget does not contain either of those proposals, but their extensive rewrite of shifting the Department of Health to local government could have significant negative fiscal ramifications for counties statewide. Look for all of these issues to be in play during the House and Senate budget conference process.

## **AG Holley**

*by: County Staff*

The County has been working with legislators and staff on proposals regarding AG Holley Tuberculosis Hospital in Lantana. As it currently stands, the Senate has proposed no changes in regards to funding for AG Holley. Taking into consideration the saving of AG Holley and the movement of patients to other locations, the Senate has taken a position to maintain continued funding. The Florida House has taken a different position in its current form and has passed legislation that would eliminate the facility and potentially transfer them to other appropriate locations. House Bill 1263 by Rep. Matt Hudson includes that legislation.

## **Online Travel Companies**

*by: Foley & Lardner*

Representative Brodeur's Online Travel bill is currently under review by the Revenue Estimating Impact Conference. Rep. Brodeur is expected to carefully analyze the findings of the conference and then will determine whether the votes are there to move forward with the issue. We expect to see the issue back up in House Finance & Tax next week.

## **Water Issues**

*by: County Staff, Foley & Lardner, Ericks Consultants, Corcoran, Johnston & Blair*

### **[NUMERIC NUTRIENT CRITERIA \(SB 2060, EPC; HB 7051, ANRS\) - Florida House Of Representatives - HB 7051 - Rules Establishing Numeric Nutrient Criteria](#)**

In 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) determined that Florida's regulation of nutrient pollution in Florida waters is insufficient to protect water quality as required by the federal Clean Water Act.

The FDEP has developed and proposed numeric nutrient criteria rules to replace the EPA's rules. In order for EPA to review and approve the Florida rules, they must be final, adopted rules. In order for the Florida rules to become final, they require legislative ratification. However, the rules cannot be legislatively ratified at this point because they are still only "proposed" rules, and currently are being challenged. In an effort to expedite the process of getting the final FDEP rules to EPA for review, the bills exempt FDEP's proposed numeric nutrient criteria rules, as approved by the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission on December 8, 2011, from the legislative ratification requirement in s. 120.541(3), F.S. The bill also requires FDEP to publish, when the rules are adopted, notice of the exemption from ratification.

The bill also requires DEP to submit its proposed numeric nutrient criteria rules to the EPA for review under the Clean Water Act within 30 days after the effective date of the bill. The FDEP estimates that implementation of the DEP rules will cost affected parties between \$51 and \$150 million annually; significantly less than the estimated cost to implement the final EPA rules. This Bill was read a third time in the Senate, laid on the table and substituted for HB 7051, which passed by unanimous vote upon third reading and is awaiting the Governor's signature. The Governor's office is expected to sign the Bill.

**PERMITS FOR ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLIES (CS/CS/SB 1178, HAYS; HB 7045, SCWP) - [Senate Bill 1178 \(2012\)](#) - The Florida Senate**

By: Erick Consultants, County Staff

Under current Florida law, WMDs may require a Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) for the development of alternative water supplies. These permits must be granted for a period of at least 20 years.

This bill would establish a new type of CUP, called an Extended Permit, for the development of alternative water supplies. Extended permits would have a term of at least 30 years, and would be granted to those applicants that can provide reasonable assurance that permit conditions will be met for the duration of the permit.

The Senate Committee on Community Affairs amended the Bill with provisions mirroring those contained in another Bill, **HB CS/1379, Brodeur**, which were initiated and supported by Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department and the Environmental Community. Like **HB 1379**, the added provisions create a new study committee that would also include on Investor-Owned Water & Wastewater Utility Systems that would meet periodically to consider small investor-owned water and wastewater means to achieve economies of scale when purchasing equipment, commodities, or services; availability of low interest loans; tax incentives or exemptions; impact on customer rates in utility purchases; and other Committee issues. The bill as amended was passed as a CS and will next be taken up in the Senate Budget Committee.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION (CS/CS/SB 716, Bennett; HB 503, Patronis)**

This bill is an environmental package which revises numerous provisions relating to development, construction, operating, and building permits. Among the many provisions, this bill would: (1) Prohibit counties or municipalities from conditioning approval for a development permit on an applicant obtaining a permit or approval from any other state or federal agency unless the state or federal agency has issued final agency action denying a state or federal permit for the development permit; (2) Allow issuance of a state permit in advance of the issuance of an incidental take authorization as provided under the Endangered Species Act and its implementing regulations if the permit and authorization include a condition requiring that authorized activities not begin until the incidental take authorization is issued; (3) Provide for expedited permitting for any inland multimodal logistics center receiving and/or sending cargo to and/or from Florida ports; (4) Create renewable energy from solid waste by a program to recycle at least 50 percent of municipal solid waste by a means other than creating renewable energy; (5) Allow waste-to-energy facilities by permit to maximize acceptance and processing of nonhazardous solid and liquid waste; and finally (6) Require DEP to require owners or operators of a solid waste management facility that receives waste to undertake corrective actions for violations of water quality standards.

The Senate Environmental Preservation & Conservation Committee adopted two amendments, the first a strike all amendment to bring SB 716 into conformity with CS/CS/CS/HB 503, a similar Bill introduced in the House by Representative Patronis. The strike all removed a number of provisions that were of concern to environmental groups, in particular a section that would have allowed for dredging in the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve.

### **Reclaimed Water (CS/SB 1086, Garcia; CS/HB 639, Young)**

This bill would remove reclaimed water from the current statutory definition of "water" and "waters in the state" until the reclaimed water has been discharged back into state "waters." That is, once a wastewater treatment plant converts wastewater into reclaimed water, it is no longer considered "waters in the state" until it has been discharged into state waters. This definitional change would clarify that the WMDs do not have the statutory authority to regulate the use of reclaimed water under the CUP permit program.

This Bill was developed over a nearly three year period by the "Reuse Stakeholder" Committee, which included the five water management districts, the FDEP, and many of Florida's water and reclaimed water utilities to develop the consensus language.

The Senate Environmental Preservation & Conservation Committee took up SB 1086 and adopted a strike-all amendment with three important changes that environmental groups have been lobbying. The changes included removing a provision that would have excluded reclaimed from the statutory definition of "waters in the state", inserting a definition of "reclaimed water". It specifically exempts reclaimed water from consumptive use permitting and the section of law relating to water shortage orders issued by the WMDs. The changes bring the Bill into identical posture with its House Companion, **CS/HB 639**.

The Bill will next be taken up in the Senate Budget Committee, its last committee of reference. The House companion, CS/HB 639, is pending on the House Calendar on Second Reading.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE PERMITTING (CS/HB 7003, ANRS; CS/SB 1354)**

This Bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to adopt statewide environmental resource permit (ERP) rules. The bill specifies the statewide ERP rules are to be based on existing DEP and WMD rules, with differences allowed that are based on geographic variances in physical or natural characteristics. The bill would allow the WMDs, with DEP oversight, to continue to adopt rules governing design and performance standards for storm water quality and quantity. Ongoing activities would be "grandfathered" and not be subject to the new rules. Local governments seeking delegation to implement the ERP program would be required to use statewide ERP rules. Local governments that have already received delegation would have one year from adoption of these rules to conform their ordinances.

The House Committee on State Affairs took up **HB 7003** and added two amendments, to bring the bill into similar posture with its Senate companion, **SB 1354**, although some non-substantive differences in language remain. The Bill as amended was passed as a **CS** and will next be taken up on the House floor. The Senate Bill is now in Budget, its final committee of reference.

### **WATER STORAGE AND WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS (CS/HB 1389, Perman; CS/SB 1858, Altman)**

**CS/HB 1389** would create new statutes stating the Legislature encourages public-private partnerships to accomplish water storage and water quality improvements on private agricultural lands in watersheds throughout the state. It would also provide that when agreements are entered into to establish such partnerships, a baseline condition determining the extent of wetlands and other surface waters on the property must be established and documented in the agreement before improvements are constructed. The House Committee on State Affairs voted favorably on **CS/HB 1389**, with broad support from environmental groups and the DEP and has been placed onto the House Calendar on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. The identical Senate Bill is on the Agricultural Committee agenda, scheduled for consideration on February 13, 2012.

## **911 Good Sam ( HB125 by Bernard/SB 278 by Sachs)**

*by: County Staff*

On Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed SB 278 by Sen. Sachs. It is now awaiting approval in the House. Language in HB 125 and SB 278 provide that a person who experiences a drug-related overdose and is in need of medical assistance may not be charged, prosecuted, or penalized for possession of a controlled substance. This only applies if the evidence for possession was obtained as a result of the overdose and the need for medical assistance.

## **Homelessness Issues**

*by: County Staff*

### Affordable Housing

The House released its proposed 2012/2013 budget and, unfortunately, it did not contain specific appropriations for affordable housing under the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund. Despite the cap removal on document stamp collections (that are collected for affordable housing) that passed last year, the House proposes to sweep those revenues into General Revenue rather than designating them solely for affordable housing. County staff has shifted its efforts to focus on the Senate's budget process to seek appropriations for affordable housing under these Trust Fund revenues. Several organizations, including the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida Realtors Association and Associated Industries of Florida all testified before the Senate Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee this week in support of affordable housing appropriations. The committee chair, Senator Benacquisto, advised the parties that she will carry the message forward to the Senate Budget Committee as it begins to hammer out the details of next year's budget.

### Tax Incentives for Hiring Homeless

Legislation supporting tax incentives for hiring the homeless was introduced this year by Senator Ring (SB 160) and Representative Campbell (HB 105); however, neither bill has been heard in committee thus far. We are not optimistic that this legislation will go anywhere this year.

### Homelessness Prevention Grant Program

Efforts to create a revenue stream to establish a homelessness prevention grant program are seeing success this year. Both HB 531 by Representative Reed and SB 1130 by Senator Storms would create an optional donation category on motor vehicle and driver's license application forms to aid the homeless. HB 531 is currently on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Calendar and SB 1130 has one more committee stop, the Senate Budget Committee, before making it to the floor for a vote. Should this legislation pass and be approved, funding would be administered by the State Office on Homelessness utilizing a competitive grant program.

## **Juvenile Justice Issues**

*by: County Staff*

### Palm Beach County Juvenile Assessment Center

County staff continues to work closely with the Department of Juvenile Justice to plan for the relocation of the Juvenile Assessment Center to the Palm Beach County Regional Juvenile Detention Center on 45<sup>th</sup> Street in West Palm Beach. This relocation will free up space the JAC currently leases at Palm Beach International Airport and allow for a co-location of juvenile justice services at the detention center. The main benefits of doing this include (1) a one stop services location for juveniles and their families, (2) a reduction in processing time for law enforcement, which allows officers to return to patrol quicker and (3) a reduction in security costs to the County as DJJ staff will absorb the security costs at the detention center. Negotiations with DJJ and the School Board are complete and an anticipated move-in date will occur during the summer of this year. County staff will be assisting DJJ with any permitting issues with the City of West Palm Beach as well as working with our JAC partners to ensure a smooth transition.

### State/County Shared Detention Center Cost Split

Proposals to change the utilization rate split from 76% County funds and 24% State funds to 73% County funds and 27% State funds, or the equivalent of a \$2.7 million recurring General Revenue contribution by DJJ, were not included in the House's proposed budget; however, a \$100,000 contribution was included in the Senate's proposed budget. County staff will continue to work with both the Senate Budget and House Appropriations Committees through the budget conference process to fully fund this appropriation request. This utilization rate change, if passed, would more closely reflect the current utilization split.

### Alternatives to Detention

HB 5401 by Representative Glorioso passed as part of the House Budget this week, which would allow counties to use respite beds for preadjudicated youth charged with domestic violence. As written in the House bill, detention care (for the purposes of determining the State/County Detention Center Cost Split) is defined as "secure detention and alternatives to secure detention, including, but not limited to, respite beds for youth charged with domestic violence charges." There was a lot of concern among counties this week that counties would be paying for all alternatives; however, staff worked with the Senate Criminal Justice Appropriations Committee to change the language in that Committee's proposed budget language to simply limit the range to respite beds for youth charged with domestic violence. We are confident the House will match the Senate language in conference.

On average, secure detention beds cost \$275 per day while respite beds cost \$100 per day. DJJ estimates that the State will need 43 respite beds for those youth charged with domestic violence that do not meet secure detention criteria; therefore, it is estimated that this change will save the State \$3.2 million. DJJ is requesting that approximately \$1.2 million of those savings be reinvested to pay for these respite beds.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury (117 & 977 by Nelson/922 by Bennett)**

*by: County Staff*

HB 977 and SB 922 constitute the *T. Patt Maney Veterans' Treatment Intervention Act*. These bills authorize the chief judge of each judicial circuit to establish a Military Veterans and Service members Court Program. This legislation allows counties to establish such a program to divert a veteran or service member who is charged with a criminal offense into an appropriate treatment program if they suffer from a mental illness, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), substance abuse disorder, or psychological problem as a result of their military service.

Additionally, both HBs 117 and 977 contain language relating to acquiring a TBI while serving in the military. On Wednesday, HB 977 passed unanimously out of the House Economic Affairs Committee while HB 117 is in its last committee of reference, the House Judiciary Committee. However, we expect SB 922 to be substituted for HB 977. SB 922 has already passed unanimously out of the Senate and is now waiting to be brought up for consideration in the House.

### **Transportation**

*by: County Staff*

HB 1399 by Brandes is in House Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee and SB 1866 by Senator Latvala is in the Budget Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism & Economic Development. Both bills are expected to be heard next week. Here are several of our priority issues addressed in the bills:

#### ***South Florida Regional Transportation Authority***

The House version completely deleted all language regarding the board makeup and would allow current law to stand. The Senate bill was

amended to allow for the Governor to make one more appointment to the board and move the FDOT representative into an ex-officio capacity.

#### **Background Checks**

The Senate bill contains provisions requiring background checks for vehicles for hire drivers.

#### **School Signage**

The House bill contains a provision extending the Palm Beach County and School Board local school sign project.

#### **Local Option Fuel Tax**

Both the House and Senate bills contain provisions allowing for the use of LOFT dollars for repair and maintenance of signalization on roads.

#### **Bus Bench Issue**

We continue to work with sponsors of the bill on language regarding bus bench liability and ADA compliance issues.

### **Reapportionment**

*by: County Staff*

This week the House and Senate passed out the final maps on reapportionment. Palm Beach County has advocated for maps to contain at least three Senate districts with a majority of their district in PBC. The maps passed by the Legislature are consistent with that position. In regards to the House and Congressional maps, the County does not have a position on them; however, we have stated that we should maintain consistency in overall representation in relation to population growth while adhering to the constitutional requirements regarding compactness and political/geographical boundaries. The congressional map maintains four seats in PBC. The House map has nine seats in PBC, two fewer than current; however, that was somewhat expected based on flat population growth and impact of constitutional changes. The Senate map has five seats in PBC, one fewer than the current membership.

Now that the legislature has voted their maps out this week, we'll monitor their status as the federal government and courts review their plans.

### **Local Bills**

*by: County Staff*

The following are local bills filed in Palm Beach County:

1255 by Abruzzo – Acme and LWDD; 1301 by Abruzzo – WPB Police;  
1325 by Abruzzo – WPB Firefighters; 1131 by Berman – Environmental Control Act; 4175 by Rooney – Rabies repeal; 1381 by Clemens – WPB DDA; 1481 by Abruzzo - LGWCD

On Tuesday, the House Government Operations Committee heard House Bill 1301, relating to the City of West Palm Beach, by Rep. Abruzzo. Rep. Nelson voiced his concerns with the 8% interest rate and was more comfortable with a 7% interest rate. The bill was reported favorably. Also in this Committee, HB 1325, related to the City of West Palm Beach, was also presented by Rep. Abruzzo and unanimously passed.

On Wednesday, the House Economic Affairs Committee heard HB 4175, relating to Palm Beach County. This bill would repeal a special act pertaining to animal control in Palm Beach County. There were no questions, debate, or public comments on the bill and it was unanimously passed.



## **Growth Management, DRI and Ag Enclaves**

*by: County Staff, Ericks Consultants, and Foley & Lardner*

The DRI bill moved out of the Senate Community Affairs with strike all amendment that included additional changes to statute regarding Agricultural enclaves. The Ag enclave issue is related to property located within St. Johns County. The language further restricts local government control over zoning in areas as defined as Ag enclaves. This language provides for equal zoning for parcels surrounded by like zoned properties on at least 90% of the property for land that is less than 640 acres in size. We met with Sen. Mike Bennett, Rep. Diaz and other interested parties to express our concerns and will continue to work with these parties to resolve these issues.

## **Local Government Tax Issues**

### **Additional Homestead Exemption**

*by: The Moya Group, Ericks Consultants, Foley & Lardner, and County Staff*

HB 1289 was heard in a Tuesday morning meeting of the House Committee on Community and Military Affairs. This legislation would propose an Amendment to the Florida Constitution allowing the Legislature to provide an addition homestead exemption for owners of homesteaded property and authorizes the Legislature to adjust the amount of that exemption from year to year. Representative Brodeur offered an Amendment to the bill that would have cut the cost to local governments almost in half.

The Florida Association of Counties testified that the legislation would have a four year impact of \$2.3 billion to local governments. This along with amendment 4 on the 2012 ballot totals almost a \$4 billion hit to local governments over a four year period.

Thank you to Representatives Berman, Campbell, Costello, Hooper, Jullien, Pafford, and Randolph who voted no on the bill resulting in a 7-7 tie, effectively killing the legislation. In a procedural move, the legislation was then brought back up for further consideration and TP'd.

### **Exemptions from Local Business Taxes**

*by: Ericks Consultants*

This bill specifies that an individual licensed and operating as a broker associate or sales associate is not required to apply for an exemption from a local business tax or take certain actions relating to a local business tax. The bill prohibits a local governing authority from holding such exempt individual liable for the failure of a principal or employer to comply with certain obligations related to a local business tax. The bill also prohibits a local governing authority from requiring a principal or employer to provide personal or contact information for such exempt individuals in order to obtain a local business tax receipt. Chair Bennett stated that he likes the bill, but he doesn't understand the language that makes it seem that this bill is only helping out realtors. He would like to see it included more as the bill moves forward. While AIF waived in support, the Florida League of Cities was in opposition because of their concern that it is just one industry being affected and wants to make sure this bill is revenue neutral to the cities. SB 770 was unanimously reported favorably by a count of 7-0.

### **Tangible Personal Property Taxes**

*By: Ericks Consultants and The Moya Group*

SJR 1064 proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution that would allow the Legislature to provide by general law that taxes on tangible personal property are not due unless the assessed value of the property exceeds a specified amount greater than twenty-five thousand dollars, tangible personal

property is subject to taxation at a specified percentage of its assessed value, and tangible personal property is totally exempt from taxation.

The Florida League of Cities and Association of Counties are opposed because of the affect on county and city ad valorem taxes. The Florida Chamber of Commerce waived in support.

SJR 1062 implements the above proposed amendment by creating an additional exemption from ad valorem taxation of tangible personal property of up to \$25,000 of taxable value. The result is an additional exemption above the current \$25,000 exemption for assessed values between \$25,001 and \$50,000. Taxpayers with tangible personal property subject to ad valorem taxation with an assessed value above \$50,000 will not qualify for the additional exemption provided in the bill. Both SB 1062 and SJR 1062 were reported favorably by unanimous vote.

### **Homestead Property Tax Exemption for Surviving Spouse of Military Veteran or First Responder**

*by: Ericks Consultants and the Moya Group*

The joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution, that would allow the Legislature to provide ad valorem tax relief to the surviving spouse of a veteran who died from service-connected causes while on active duty as a member of the United States Armed Forces and to the surviving spouse of a first responder who died in the line of duty. The amount of tax relief, to be defined by general law, can equal the total amount or a portion of the ad valorem tax otherwise owed on homestead property. CS/SJR 1056 was unanimously reported favorably by a count of 7-0.

### **Crime Lab Funding**

*by: Ericks Consultants*

Thank you to Senator Ellyn Bogdanoff, the new chair of Senate Criminal & Civil Justice Appropriations Subcommittee, who placed crime lab funding language that would benefit Palm Beach County into a conforming bill of the Senate budget package. The new language would mandate that any defendant pay a \$100 fee for the use of the crime lab. This issue will be part of the conference process.

### **Scripps**

*by: Ericks Consultants and County Staff*

On Friday of last week, we spoke to both Representative Precourt and Senator Bogdanoff regarding language that would create additional research partnerships with the Department of Health for Scripps. This week, we met with representatives from Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute on collaborative language to add an additional 1% of funds from the Biomedical Trust Fund to be directed to research at Scripps Florida. This will most likely be an issue addressed during next Session.

### **Red Light Cameras**

*by: The Moya Group and Foley & Lardner*

Senate Bill 590 by Senator Garcia was heard in Tuesday afternoons Senate Transportation Committee. The legislation tightens up the red light camera statute by creating additional defenses for a deceased car owner, clarifying right on red violations, and stating that cameras may not be used on signals that do not meet engineering standards until they are brought up to current standards.

None of the camera bills have been considered in the House; however,

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Steven Abrams, Vice Chair

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Burt Aaronson

Jess R. Santamaria

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proponents of the technology remain vigilant against any efforts to repeal current law.

**Community Redevelopment Agencies**

*by: The Moya Group*

House Bill 547 by Representative Fresen was heard in Tuesday afternoon's Finance and Tax committee. This legislation provides certain requirements for community redevelopment agencies and allows a method for their termination. The League of Cities opposed this legislation stating that disputes need to be handled at the auditor general level. Testimony was taken stating that the bill sets up poor precedent and that these issues should be handled internally without state involvement. The bill received a 12-12 vote effectively killing the legislation.

**State Contracting**

*By: Corcoran, Johnston, and Blair*

On Monday, in the House Government Operations Subcommittee, HB 1409, relating to State Contracting, was presented by Rep. Albritton, with a strike-all amendment being adopted. This amended bill would place extensive requirements in the Department of Financial Services in order to increase accountability and oversight, and to study and streamline procurement practices. Rep. O'Toole asked about a one-time \$400,000 appropriation in the bill, which Rep. Albritton explained would be used to generate the study referred to in the bill. The committee heard testimony from the Florida League of Cities, who spoke in opposition to the measure. The League of Cities was concerned about language in the bill which would eventually apply the same heightened standards to municipal and local contracting, especially the contract reporting requirement. A representative of DFS waived their time to speak in support of the bill. The bill was reported favorably, with a unanimous vote in favor.

**Term Limits for County Officers**

*By: Corcoran, Johnston, and Blair*

On Thursday, the House Economic Affairs Committee heard HJR 785, relating to Term Limits/County Officers. This Constitutional amendment, presented by Rep. Wood, would allow voters in Florida counties to impose term limits on county commissioners through the county charter process. An amendment to the bill changes the original bill to remove term limits from all constitutional officers in a county, and to only apply them to county commissioners. The amendment was adopted without objection.

Rep. Waldman asked if this bill would have an effect on certain litigation currently pending in Broward and possibly Palm Beach Counties. Rep. Wood was unsure of the bill's impact on that litigation, but noted that passing this amendment would provide guidance to the Florida Supreme Court if it ever took up the measure, and formalize what many counties throughout the State have already done. There was no further debate on the bill, and it was reported favorably. Rep. Slosberg was the only Member to vote in opposition.