



**FUBA**  
FLORIDA UNITED BUSINESSES ASSOCIATION

# ISSUES

OUR BUSINESS IS SMALL BUSINESS

**MAY 2019**

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## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

The Florida Legislature wrapped up their annual legislative session on Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. Lawmakers debated many bills that would impact Florida businesses, and this newsletter summarizes bills that failed as well as those that passed and will become law if approved by the Governor.

If you have any questions about any of these bills, please call the FUBA offices at 800-262-4483 and ask for Lance or Karen.

### **Employment Issues:**

**Senate Bill 164 and House Bill 89** would have required most employers to use the federal E-Verify system to verify legal immigration status of newly-hired employees. These bills did not pass.

**House Bill 393** would have created the Florida Family Leave Act and would have allowed employees who work an average of 20 or more hours a week to receive a paid leave of absence for up to 6 months for the birth or adoption of a child. This bill did not pass.

**House Bill 417** would have required employers to adopt a sexual harassment prevention policy. Employers would have had to provide the sexual harassment prevention policy to all employees in writing and also post a copy of the policy at the workplace. This bill did not pass.

**House Bill 517** would have increased the Florida minimum wage by \$1 in 2020 and then by \$1.50 each year after that until 2024. [Florida's minimum wage is currently \$8.46 an hour.] This bill did not pass.

**House Bill 563** gives employees who have to quit their jobs due to a domestic violence situation at home the right to file for reemployment assistance benefits (formally known as unemployment benefits). If approved by the Governor, this law will become effective July 1, 2019.

### **Contracting:**

**House Bill 763** allows locally-registered electrical, alarm system, and electrical specialty contractors to become certified statewide contractors by submitting an application for grandfathering to the Electrical Contractors Licensing Board by November 1, 2021. If approved by the Governor, this law will become effective July 1, 2019.

### **Taxes:**

**House Bill 979** would have allowed businesses to pay the sales tax for customers buying from them, instead of charging their customers for the sales tax. This bill did not pass.

**House Bill 7123** creates a 5-day back-to-school sales tax holiday from August 2 – 6 where various school-related items will be sold tax-free, such as clothing, shoes, wallets and backpacks. The holiday also includes various school supplies such as pens, pencils, notebooks, crayons, binders, and lunch boxes, as well as personal computers and accessories sold at \$1,000 or less.

The bill also creates a hurricane preparedness sales tax holiday from May 31 – June 6 that will exempt various items from the state sales tax. Items included are portable self-powered lights, portable self-powered radios, two-way radios or weather band radios, tarps, gas tanks, coolers, and portable generators.

The bill also reduces the tax that businesses have to pay on commercial leases from 5.7% to 5.5% effective January 1, 2020. The bill has been signed into law by the Governor.

### **Miscellaneous Regulatory Issues:**

**House Bill 507** would have allowed corporations and limited liability companies to file their annual report with the Florida Division of Corporations every two years instead of every year. This bill did not pass.

**Senate Bill 502** would have prohibited restaurants and other food service businesses from providing customers with plastic carry-out bags and plastic straws. This bill did not pass.

**Senate Bill 1618** would have raised the legal age to buy tobacco products, such as cigarettes and electronic smoking devices, from 18 to 21 years old. This bill did not pass.

**Senate Bill 7012** implements an amendment to the Florida Constitution approved by Florida voters last year that bans the use of vapor-generating electronic devices, such as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), in enclosed public indoor workplaces. This includes e-cigarettes

which are commonly referred to as vaping. These devices could still be used in retail establishments that sell vaping and e-cigarette equipment as well as bars that do not sell food. This bill has been signed by the Governor and will take effect July 1, 2019.

## **FREE WORKPLACE SAFETY SERVICES AVAILABLE**

SafetyFlorida, located at the University of South Florida in Tampa, is dedicated to helping small businesses prevent work-related injuries. The program is funded by the federal government (OSHA) and the State of Florida. It provides free, confidential assistance to help Florida's small businesses keep their workers safe. By reducing the costs associated with injuries, small businesses can reduce their workers' compensation costs and increase productivity.

USF SafetyFlorida also maintains a library of safety videos on a wide variety of topics that businesses can check out free of charge. They also provide small businesses with help writing a safety program, which can help a business save 2% off their workers' comp premium.

USF SafetyFlorida is offering a series of free seminars on fall prevention (important for contractors). All seminars are from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. The dates of the seminars are:

### Fall Hazard Awareness:

- May 6 – Jacksonville
- May 7 – Wesley Chapel
- May 8 – Kissimmee
- May 9 – Ft. Lauderdale

For more information about the services offered by USF SafetyFlorida, or to register for one of the free seminars, you can visit their website at **[health.usf.edu/publichealth/cohpe/usfsafetyflorida](http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/cohpe/usfsafetyflorida)** or call them at 866-273-1105.