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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2008 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature adjourned on Friday, May 2nd. Of the 2503 bills that were filed for consideration, only 313 were approved by both the House and the Senate and now await action from the Governor. Below, we summarize some of the bills that are important to FUBA members. Please remember: these bills will not become law if disapproved by the Governor. If you would like copies of any of these bills, or if you have questions about them, please call the FUBA offices and ask for Karen, Lance, or Erin.

TAXES:

Value Adjustment Boards (House Bill 909 by Representative Peter Nehr). This pro-business legislation will give property owners in Florida a standardized procedure by which they can challenge the property appraiser's assessment of their property's value. The bill also puts tighter restrictions on the method of assessing properties based on their potential value and not their actual use.

Corporate Income Tax (House Bill 5065 by Representative Grant). This bill speeds up the quarterly corporate income tax payments so that there will be 5 payments in this fiscal year, instead of the usual 4 payments. The July 1, 2009 payment will now be due on June 30, 2009.

HEALTH INSURANCE:

Cover Florida Health Care Access Program/Florida Health Choices Program

(Senate Bill 2534 by Senator Durell Peaden). This bill contains 2 different approaches to give Floridians access to more affordable health insurance.

- The Cover Florida Health Care Access Program is designed to provide an affordable health care option for uninsured residents of Florida between the ages of 19 and 64 who are not currently covered by health insurance and who have been uninsured for at least the last 6 months. This Plan is designed to allow insurers and HMO's to provide consumers a choice of benefit plans at affordable prices. The state will begin soliciting plans from insurance companies no later than July 1, 2008.
- The Florida Health Choices Program is created as a single, centralized market for the sale of products that enable individuals to pay for health care. Participation is voluntary, and eligible employers include small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. Products sold through the program are not subject to the mandated coverages established in state law or certain other regulations normally applied to health insurance. Information about the products and services in the program will be made available to consumers in a variety of ways, including a secure web site.

EMPLOYMENT REGULATION:

Guns at Work (House Bill 503 by Representative Evers). This new law, which has already been approved by the Governor,

requires employers to allow their employees who have a valid concealed-weapons permit to have their firearm locked inside their car on company premises. Employers cannot terminate an employee for having a gun in their car.

Employee Leave for Sexual Violence (House Bill 489 by Representative Jenne).

This bill requires businesses with 50 or more employees to allow employees who have been with the company at least 3 months to take up to 3 work days of leave with or without pay within a 12-month period if the employee is a victim of sexual violence. Employers may require employees using this leave to use up all other available leave, and employers may require documentation of the sexual violence (i.e., a police report).

Cosmetology (Senate Bill 996 by Senator Wise).

This bill redefines the practice of cosmetology, including hair stylist services, esthetician services, and nail technician services. The bill permits a person to obtain a license as a hair stylist, esthetician, or nail technician and provides that a licensed cosmetologist may provide all three of these specialty services. The bill also increases minimum education requirements for these licenses.

SMALL BUSINESS:

Small Business Regulatory Relief (House Bill 7109 by Representative Attkisson).

This bill creates a Small Business Regulatory Review Advisory Council to review and evaluate state regulations for their impact on small businesses in the state. The bill also establishes an annual process for small businesses to nominate agency rules or programs for reform.

Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises (House Bill 687 by Representative Proctor).

This bill creates state contracting set-asides, goals, and preferences to specifically benefit small businesses owned and operated by service-disabled veterans.

AGRICULTURE:

Agriculture and Farming

Equipment/Highways (Senate Bill 1946 by Senator Baker).

This bill revises restrictions on the use of certain agriculture-related vehicles by exempting these vehicles from state width and height limitations when temporarily operated during daylight on a public road. To be eligible for the exemption, the equipment must be operated within a 50-mile radius of the real property owned, rented, or leased by the equipment owner.

Farm Labor Contractors (House Bill 601 by Representative Hudson).

This bill eliminates the background check for farm labor contractors that are federally registered.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION:

Day Laborers (Senate Bill 854 by Senator Fasano).

This bill disqualifies employees of day labor pools from receiving unemployment compensation benefits if, without good cause, the day laborer fails to report on the next business day to obtain a new assignment. The day labor pool is required to provide the day laborer with notice at the time of hire that he or she must report in person for reassignment the next business day following conclusion of each assignment.

Unemployment Compensation Benefits

(Senate Bill 1026 by Senator Fasano).

This bill authorizes the state to develop and implement a system for paying unemployment benefits electronically, including debit cards or electronic payment cards.