



# SINE DIE BRIEF

## 2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

**NOTE:** The following is just a brief look at the final dispensation of some of the major working family bills we were following during the 2018 Legislative Session.

	<b>PASS</b>	<b>FAIL</b>
<p><b>Education: Charter Expansion and Teacher Decert</b></p> <p><b>HB 7055 by Bileca - OPPOSE</b></p> <p>The 200-page education omnibus bill doesn't have much of the good but does contain lots of the bad and the ugly. This massive package is another sweeping overhaul of our education system with the clear goal of expanding Florida's school privatization experiments. It reduces state oversight and accountability for charter and private schools, suggests new funding schemes for charter and private schools, changes education governance and much more.</p> <p>The bill also includes the same union decertification language as HB 25 but here it only applies to instructional personnel. The bill could have been stopped in the Senate, but one democratic Senator was not on the floor at the time of the vote and another democrat voted in support.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Supermajority Vote to Close Loopholes, Exemptions, Raise Revenue (TABOR)</b></p> <p><b>SB 1742 by Stargel / HB 7001 by Leek - OPPOSE</b></p> <p>This was one of the biggest threats to working families this session. The bill proposes an amendment to Florida's Constitution requiring a supermajority vote in both chambers to raise revenues, close current tax exemptions and eliminate corporate tax loopholes. Florida's revenue picture is grim right now and state services are suffering across the board. This proposed constitutional amendment would lock us in at these low levels in perpetuity. <i>This bill was another form of the disastrous Tax Payer Bill of Rights (TABOR) public policy that we have fought and defeated in the past.</i> The Senate version required a 3/5 supermajority vote and this provision did not count for repealing tax exemptions. The House version required a 2/3 supermajority vote and this requirement did apply to the repeal of exemptions. In an unprecedented waiving of the rules, the Senate tabled their version and passed the House language with the support of three Senate democrats. If these three democrats had voted correctly, this terrible idea would have failed on the floor.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





**PASS**

**FAIL**

**TAX CUTS / PUBLIC SCHOOL REVENUE**



**HB 7087 by Rep. Renner - OPPOSE**

The House tax package included cuts to the taxes paid on commercial leases largely benefitting big box retailers, sales tax exemptions for airlines that hurt infrastructure projects for airports, and many other special interest driven cuts to the Corporate Income Tax. The worst parts of the bill are changes in statute that open up Sales and Use Tax revenue to use for private school vouchers. This is a major expansion of the private school vouchers schemes, one that opens the door for massive expansion in the future. A late-filed amendment also changes Florida's labor laws increasing the number of independent contractors ineligible for workers' compensation. **The total impact of the bill in fiscal year 2018-19 is -\$319.9 million (-\$263.2 million recurring).**

**HOPE SCHOLARSHIP - VOUCHERS ON DEMAND**



**SB 1172 by Galvano / HB 1 by Donalds - OPPOSE**

These bills create the first ever subjective voucher program. It allows students to attend private schools at taxpayer expense if they claim to be victims of bullying, harassment or any form of campus violence. The bullies or other perpetrators of the violence would remain in the public schools. This is biggest expansion of the controversial school voucher system in state history and could lead to the eventual dissolution of our most important public good, public schools. Initial estimates indicate that this program could cost public education \$40 million in the first year alone. *The stand alone version of this bill failed to pass the Senate, but the language was included in HB 7055 and passed both chambers.*

**DECERTIFYING PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS**



**SB 1036 by Steube / HB 25 by Plakon - OPPOSE**

This bill creates burdensome new reporting requirements for public sector unions (groups that already have some of the heaviest reporting requirements in the state) and then uses the information collected to decertify those same unions. This bill would allow for the decertification of any public sector bargaining unit that can't demonstrate that their membership represents 50% or more of the total number of employees in the unit. Right to Work (for less) provides a disincentive for workers to join their unions because they can get all of the benefits without joining. This legislation then eliminates those same unions from the very phenomena created by Right to Work (for less). The Florida Labor Unity Table successfully stopped this all out attack on collective bargaining in our state for yet another year, but fully expect this ALEC template legislation to be pushed by corporate special interests in future sessions.



**PASS**

**FAIL**

**SPECIAL RISK RETIREMENT - FORENSIC & OTHER HOSPITAL WORKERS**

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**SB 1758 by Montford / HB 493 by Diaz - SUPPORT**

Forensic Health Care 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 protects 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. These bills would correct this serious injustice, and the Florida AFL-CIO will continue to advance this discussion in sessions to come.

**STATEWIDE FRACKING BAN**

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**SB 462 by Young / HB 237 by Peters - SUPPORT**

Fracking involves injecting millions of gallons of highly-pressurized water, usually mixed with sand and chemicals, deep into the earth to crack the rock and release oil or gas deposits. Another method - known as "matrix acidizing" - involves injecting acidic chemicals into underground rock formations, but at lower pressure, with the chemicals dissolving the rock (not fracturing it) to release oil and gas. All fracking techniques use a toxic chemical combination and produce large volumes of wastewater. Spills and leaks resulting from the transport, storage, and injection of hazardous chemicals pose a serious threat of contaminating our drinking water and water resources.

Nearly 75 percent of chemicals used in fracking have been proven harmful to the skin, eyes, respiratory system, and digestive system. Nearly half these chemicals also affect the immune, cardiovascular, and brain/nervous system functions, and a quarter cause cancer and congenital disabilities. In Florida, the risks that fracking and fracking-related activities pose to our state's water supplies are too great. The delegates to multiple conventions of the Florida AFL-CIO have voted overwhelmingly to support statewide bans of this dangerous practice.



**PASS**

**FAIL**

**FEDERAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT**



**SB 308 by Bean / HB 9 by Metz - OPPOSE**

This bill attempted to obstruct the power and authority of local governments to protect the civil rights of their communities; would have forced local governments and officials to cooperate with federal immigration authorities at a level that is not mandated or funded by the federal government; would have authorized the Attorney General to sue local governments and officials who do not comply, and would have fined localities up to \$5,000 per day for not enforcing these policies. This wasn't just an attack on immigrant communities, this was another attack on local control, one that could have had negative impacts on local budgets and public sector workers everywhere. For the second year in a row this bill passed the House but was never heard in the Senate.

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION**



**HB 7009 by Burgess - OPPOSE**

In 2003, citing rising insurance premiums, the legislature radically altered Florida's workers' comp system. They slashed benefits for workers, capped attorney's fees so injured workers couldn't access the courts, cut retraining programs and many other negative changes impacting workers. The Florida Supreme Court has ruled that some aspects of the law are unconstitutional (i.e. caps on fees) so the Legislature had to revisit the law.

**In addition to protecting access to the courts, we will be pushing for:**

- The ability for injured workers to use the doctor of their choice
- A reinstatement of training benefits
- An increase in benefits for workers deemed to have a "permanent total disability" and other changes.

This bill did not address these issues at all and in fact, further diminished the ability for injured workers to access the courts. HB 7009 was almost identical to last year's House bill that we vigorously fought and eventually defeated. The Senate did not offer a comprehensive workers' comp bill leaving the issue to be addressed in future sessions.

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**



**SB 856 by Montford / HB 577 by Silvers - SUPPORT**

These bills allowed high school students who are enrolled in career education courses may earn credits to satisfy their graduation requirements by completing apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs registered with the Department of Education under Chapter 446 FS.



**PASS**

**FAIL**

**SPECIAL RISK RETIREMENT - 911 OPERATORS**



**SB 606 by Steube / HB 379 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. The Florida AFL-CIO will continue to further this discussion in future sessions.

**PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES UNDER THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAW**



**SB 1568 by Farmer - SUPPORT**

Numerous reports from investigative journalists in Florida and nationwide, have exposed a truly terrible injustice being committed under Florida's workers' compensation system. Undocumented workers are being hired and sent to work. If they are injured, the employer working in conjunction with the insurance carrier calls ICE and has the worker deported without the necessary medical care.

The courts have ruled that this practice is illegal but a loophole buried in Florida statutes allows it to happen. This legislation would have closed that loophole so all workers covered by a workers' compensation policy are granted the medical care and other benefits they deserve and their employers have paid for.

The bill also created penalties for those unscrupulous business owners who attempt to deport workers for being injured on the job. With the support of bill sponsor Senator Farmer, The Florida AFL-CIO helped lead the charge in remedying this injustice for the first time this legislative session, and look forward to furthering the discussion in years to come.