



Week Five – February 10-14, 2020

The Legislature officially reached the midpoint of the 2020 Legislative Session last week with both chambers passing their respective budget proposals and setting the stage for the conference committee process to work out the differences. The respective spending plans remain \$1.4 billion apart, a difference that must be resolved in the weeks ahead.

The full House of Representatives is ready to take up the contingency fee multiplier bill being supported by Citizens.

Meanwhile, committee work continued at a brisk pace. On Monday, the [Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee](#) unanimously passed [SB 1270](#) by [Senator Tom Lee \(R-Brandon\)](#). The bill would add new training requirements for governing board appointees on ethics and fiduciary responsibilities. The bill is applicable to Citizens Board of Governors. The bill now heads to the [Senate Community Affairs Committee](#).

The committee also unanimously approved [SB 1636](#) by [Senator Dennis Baxley \(R-Ocala\)](#) which abolishes specific advisory bodies and programs that are no longer active, necessary, or beneficial to the furtherance of a public purpose. The My Safe Florida Home Program Advisory Council, which Citizens Executive Director has a seat on, would be among the boards eliminated under the proposal. The bill now goes to the [Senate Community Affairs Committee](#).

On Tuesday, the [Senate Banking and Insurance Committee](#) met and heard [SB 1334](#) by [Senator Jeff Brandes \(R-St. Petersburg\)](#). The wide-ranging financial services bill makes a number of changes regarding the rights and responsibilities of insurers and policyholders including noticing requirements before certain civil actions can begin. The bill also makes several changes regarding the rates and forms that may be used by property insurers.

After lengthy, robust discussion, the bill was temporarily postponed after the sponsor acknowledged he did not have enough votes to get the bill out of committee. The bill has not been added to the next Banking and Insurance Committee meeting.

The Committee also heard [SB 1618](#) by [Senator Manny Diaz \(R-Hialeah Gardens\)](#) creating a pilot program to monitor and report the effects of limestone mining blasting activity on residences in Miami Dade County. Several local communities have raised concerns over blasting activities in their area and the effects on their residences.

The bill passed unanimously and now heads to the [Senate Rules Committee](#). The House version of the bill, [HB 1047](#) by [Representative Bryan Avila \(R-Hialeah\)](#), awaits action in [House State Affairs Committee](#).

In Other House Action

The [House Ways and Means Committee](#) passed [HB 529](#) by [Representative Jennifer Webb \(D-St. Petersburg\)](#) relating to the Florida Insurance Guaranty Association (FIGA). The bill increases from \$100,000 to \$200,000 the maximum amount of coverage FIGA must provide per condominium unit within a condominium association covered by FIGA. The bill also increases the emergency assessment FIGA can levy from a maximum of 2 percent to 4 percent. The bill now goes to the [House Commerce Committee](#).

The [House Appropriations Committee](#) unanimously passed [HB 1111](#) by [Representative Josie Tomkow \(R-Auburndale\)](#) creating the Florida Integrity Office under the Auditor General. The office would receive and investigate any complaint alleging fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or misconduct in connection with the expenditure of public funds. The Florida Integrity Office would be led by a Florida Integrity Officer

appointed by the Auditor General. The bill passed unanimously and now goes to the [House State Affairs Committee](#).

The House Commerce Committee took up [HB 7071](#) by [Representative Mike Beltran \(R-Valrico\)](#) the attorney fee multiplier bill. The bill creates a strong presumption that the lodestar amount is sufficient and reasonable except in “rare and exceptional” circumstances when a competent counsel could not be retained in a reasonable manner. The bill passed 16-7 and is ready for a vote of the full House of Representatives.

The committee also heard [HB 1137](#) by [Representative Chuck Clemons \(R-Jonesville\)](#) the consumer protection bill being spearheaded by CFO Jimmy Patronis. A strike-all amendment was adopted that includes an increase from 14 to 21 days the time for an insured or claimant to cancel a public adjuster contract and requires a public adjuster to provide an itemized estimate of repairs to the insured within 45 days. The bill is now ready for a vote of the full House of Representatives.

Committee action continues this week. Both chambers will meet in full sessions midweek.